Purple Innocence
紫色の潔白
REMEMBER TO SUPPORT THE MANGAKA,
AND BUY YOUR COPY TODAY!!
DO NOT SHARE OUTSIDE
OF IRC WITHOUT PERMISSION.

KEIKO YAMADA

Vs.

VERSUS

1

VS.

VERSUS

Volume 1

By Keiko Yamada

IT CAN BE A BROADSWORD THAT IS ABLE TO PIERCE THE HEAVENS...AN OLD SWORD LOOKING TO BREAK...A BARBARIC SWORD...AN ELEGANT LONG SWORD.
THERE IS AN INVISIBLE MAGIC SWORD.
THAT SWORD DIFFERS DEPENDING ON WHO IS WIELDING IT.
THE SWORD CAN BE CALLED "GENIUS."
IF SO, THEN WHAT KIND IS MY SWORD?

Vs.

VERSUS

1

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Opus 1 Enfants Terribles

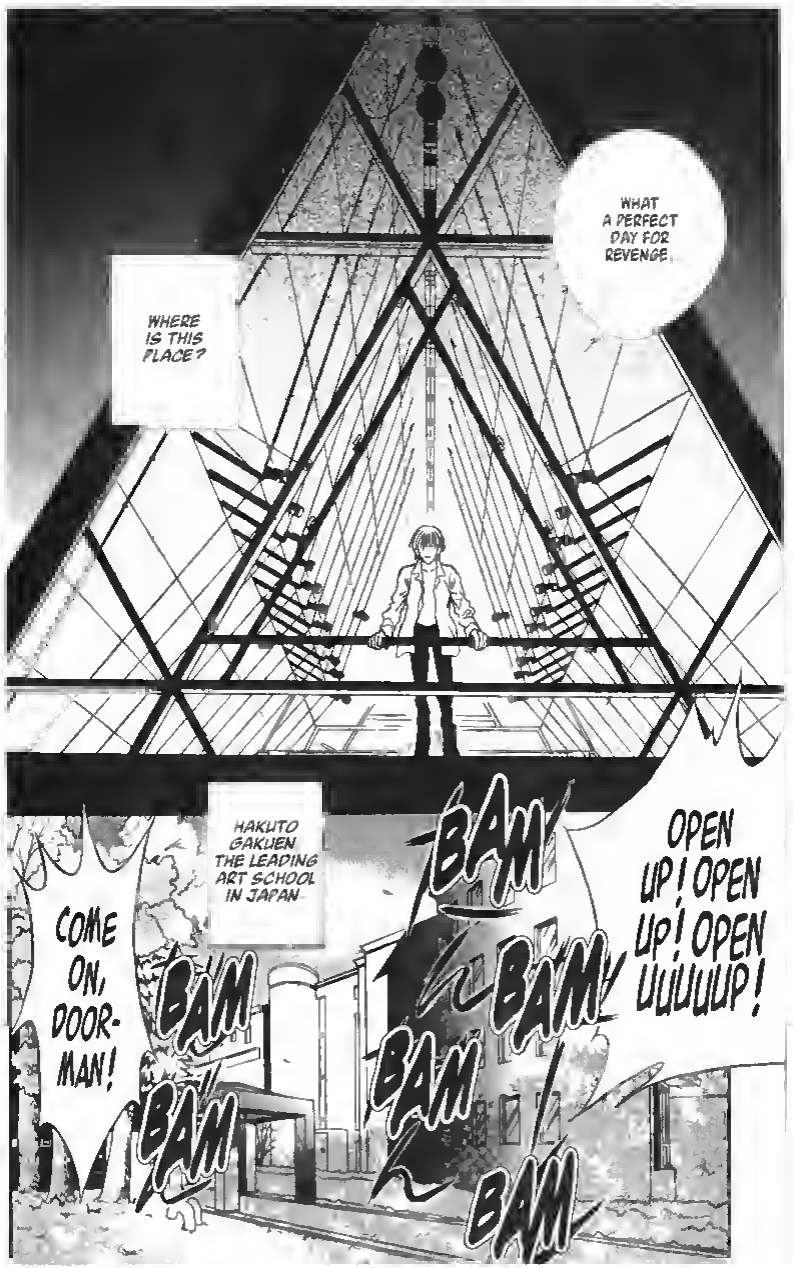
REIJI...
REI...JI...
I... I CAN'T GO ON...
MY FINGERS . THEY WON'T..

DAN
DAN
DA
DA
DA
DA

...IF I'VE BEEN ANY HELP TO YOU.
THANK YOU, KAORI SENSEI.
SLEEP WELL.

KAORI..
I REFUSE TO LOSE TO HIM.
I DON'T KNOW..
...AND YOU'VE COMPLETELY MEMORIZED THE SCORE.
THAT WAS GOOD.. EXCELLENT.
EVEN THOUGH WE ONLY HAD ONE NIGHT.

CLOMP
CLOMP
CLOMP
GOOD MORNING!
A PLACE FOR A THOROUGH EDUCATION IN THE ARTS, FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO COLLEGE.
I CALL THIS PRACTICE ROOM!
HURRY! IT'S OUR LAST CHANCE TO REVIEW BEFORE THE CONTEST!
SNIFF SNIFF
NO WONDER. IF THEY WIN TODAY'S COMPETITION ...
OFF TO A BAD START...
FROM JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ON, IT'S A BOARDING SCHOOL.
HUH? WHERE IS EVERY BODY?


WHERE IS THIS PLACE?
WHAT A PERFECT DAY FOR REVENGE.
HAKUTO GAKUEN THE LEADING ART SCHOOL IN JAPAN.
COME ON, DOOR-MAN!
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
OPEN UP! OPEN UP! OPEN UUUUUP!

THEY ARE THE STUDENTS OF HAKUTO GAKUEN.
SHINOHARA SENEI!
MY... MY STOMACH HURTS!
THESE ARTISTS ARE AS SHAMELESS AS DEMONS, YET ... DELICATE..
IT'LL BE FINE ONCE YOU GET STARTED.
OKAY, OKAY.
PSYCHE!! FOOLED YA!
PAT
PAT
PAT
I KNOW IT'S HARD BEFORE A PERFORMANCE.
AH— THIS KID'S KILLING ME..
HAHAHAHA

SUPPORT A SPECIAL GROUP OF ARTISTS.
THE CAMPUS HAS THEATERS
Japan National Music Contest
Japanese Arts Support Council
...ART GALLERIES AND CONCERT HALLS. THE PROFITS..
I CAN'T POSSIBLY DO MY SOLO!
I CAN'T DO IT AT ALL!
..THEY CAN PLAY IN THE JAPAN NATIONALS!

TODAY, FIFTY-ONE JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS WILL BE EXAMINED.
YOU EACH HAVE FIFTEEN MINUTES.
WE'LL START WITH THE VIOLIN SECTION.
YOU WILL ALL PLAY THE SAME ASSIGNED PIECE
THE NAMES OF EIGHT FINALISTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED LATER TODAY.
YOU HAVE SPENT ALL MONTH PREPAIRING FOR THIS DAY.

SO MOST OF YOU CUTE KIDS..
BUT THIS IS A QUALIFIER FOR THE JAPAN NATIONAL CONTEST.
WE'RE ONLY LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN WIN THE NATIONALS.
-WILL GET KNOCKED DOWN ONE BY ONE.

HE'S ONE OF THE TOP VIOLINISTS IN THE COUNTRY.
IF ONLY WE COULD GET LESSONS FROM SHINOHARA SENSEI.
LOOK AT THOSE GIRLS.
KYAH KYAH
NO WAY. SHINOHARA IS WAY TOO POPULAR!
AND A HAKUTO ALUM, TOO.

Hakuto Full Orchestra Chief Conductor
Marco Primavera

SAIOIN!
HE ONLY LEFT TO GO HOME AND SLEEP.
SHINOHARA SENSEI GAVE HIM A RESERVED PRACTICE ROOM FOR THE MONTH.
HE GOT TO PRACTICE AWAY FROM ALL THE NOISE OF THE REST OF US.
THAT'S HOW GOOD HE IS.
HE'S BEEN TO THE NATIONALS TWICE SINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
THAT FOOL!

WE'LL SEE WHO CAN'T PENETRATE TO THE HEART OF THE PIECE.
AND WHO LOSES POWER IN THE LATER PARTS.
YOU'VE ONLY HAD ONE MONTH SINCE THE ASSIGNMENT WAS ANNOUNCED.
SO THE DIFFERENCES IN YOUR CONCENTRATION WILL COME OUT.
YES.
SO HE'S ONE OF THE CUTER ONES.
HE LOOKS GOOD ON STAGE.
YOU EAT TOO MUCH, MAESTRO.
THAT KID IS NUMBER SIXTEEN.
I TOLD HIM TO DIET IF HE WANTS TO PERFORM.
NUMBER FIFTEEN IS JUST THE SAME.
I'M NUMBER THIRTY-ONE SORRY I'M LATE!
SKIP HIM, THEN.
NUMBER THIRTY-ONE! YOU'RE NEXT!
I OVER-SLEPT IN THE DORM.
NOT HERE?
IS NUMBER THIRTY-ONE HERE?

THE MUSIC I LOVE, PART 1

HELLO, EVERYBODY. THANK YOU FOR BUYING "VS. / VERSUS." BY THE WAY, IT'S PRONOUNCED JUST "VERSUS," NOT "V.S. VERSUS."

MY REASONS FOR DRAWING A CLASSICAL MUSIC MANGA WERE WRITTEN UP IN THE *HIGUMA JOURNAL*. I'LL BE HONEST ABOUT SOMETHING--I DON'T KNOW A SINGLE THING ABOUT CLASSICAL MUSIC. I'M REALLY COMPLETELY IGNORANT. I'M TOO EMBARRASSED TO SHOW MY FACE IN FRONT OF A CLASSICAL MUSIC LOVER. BUT EVEN THOUGH I DON'T KNOW MUCH, I STUDIED UP BY BUYING A LOT OF CD'S. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AN EASY WAY TO GET USED TO IT. I WENT OUT AND BOUGHT THE CD "DREAM MELODIES" FROM THE POLYDOR SERIES "CLASSICS YOU'VE HEARD SOMEWHERE." IT WAS THE FIRST CLASSICAL MUSIC CD I HAVE EVER OWNED. ONE OF THE TRACKS WAS ABOUT FIVE MINUTES LONG, A TUNE USED A LOT IN COMMERCIALS AND FILMS. YOU'VE PROBABLY ALL HEARD IT WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT IT IS.

CONTINUED IN PART 2.

WELL THERE WAS ONLY ONE MONTH TO PREPARE.
YOUR FINGERS ARE SWOLLEN. DIDN'T YOU REST THEM?
I'M SORRY, SHINOHARA SENSEI.
...THE TCHAIKOVSKY PIECE WE PRACTICED TOGETHER.
GOOD LUCK OUT THERE.

EVEN AFTER THE SCANDALS HE CAUSED THE LAST TWO TIMES...
...HE'S STILL AIMING FOR THE JAPAN NATIONALS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THE NERVE OF THAT GUY.
SAIOIN! YOU'RE LATE! YOU HAD ME WORRIED!

DO YOU?
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT POSITION YOU'RE IN?
"...IS THIS TCHAIKOVSKY."
"THE ASSIGNED PIECE..."
"IT WOULDN'T BE ANY GOOD FOR A STUDENT WITH YOUR ABILITIES TO DO THE SAME PIECE AS THE OTHER STUDENTS."
"FROM TODAY, HERE, WITH JUST ME"
"...WE'LL PRACTICE IT TOGETHER."
I'LL GIVE IT A TRY.
CAN YOU PLAY ANY OF IT?
YOU STILL HAVE A LITTLE TIME LEFT.
BUT, MAESTRO...!

THANK YOU, SIR.
STOP RIGHT THERE!
WHO TOLD YOU TO PLAY TCHAIKOVSKY?!
THE HUNGARIAN DANCES!
FL
THE ASSIGNMENT WAS RACHMANINOFF!
Rachmaninoff
AP

FORGETTING YESTERDAY
FORGETTING EVEN TOMORROW
THE DANCE OF THE GYPSIES.
THE HAND THAT STIRS THE CHORD
SHINES LIKE THE FLAME OF THE TORCH
IT BECOMES A SHOWER OF SPARKS.

From "Aleko."
by
Sergei Rachmaninoff
Op. 6, No. 2.,
Dance Songroise

BEEP
BEEP
WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT GIRL DOING?
. THAT I ASKED HER TO SHOW UP IN TIME FOR THE CONTEST.
IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE OF INSTANCES LIKE THIS.
RRING
RRING
RRING
IT'S IN YOUR BAG.
HEY, MISS...
YOUR CELL PHONE'S RINGING.
..WHAT'S THAT RING TONE?
HUH?
RRING
SET IT FOR ME, WILL YOU?
WHAT, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW?! CAN'T YOU SEE I'M IN A RUSH HERE?! C'MON!
HUH?!
SLAP

HOW?!
HOW DID HE PLAY IT?!
I HAD HIM PRACTICE A DIFFERENT PIECE ALL MONTH!
WOW.
WE'LL HAVE TO SEND THAT PEST TO THE JAPAN NATIONALS AGAIN.
WELL, WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE.
STILL, I WONDER HOW HE GOT ASSIGNED THE WRONG PIECE.

I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY FOR A PLANE TICKET TO AMERICA, SO I PLAN TO WORK!
Saioin Reji...
...won the contest.
IN THE FIVE HOURS SINCE MY PLANE LANDED, I SPENT ALL THE MONEY YOU PAID ME ON CLOTHES, FURNITURE AND A CAR.
We're waiting.
Hurry up and get here, Mitsuko.
SWIPE

MAESTRO!!
I AM CARRYING IT BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME TO, BUT IT'S REALLY DISTRACTING!
PLEASE DON'T RING ME UP AT A TIME LIKE THIS!
WHAT? OF COURSE I STILL WANT THE JOB!
WHAT? ..NOW?
IN A RAMEN SHOP. IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN TO ONE SINCE I GOT BACK IN THE COUNTRY. I HAVEN'T HAD RAMEN IN FOURTEEN YEARS!
SLURP

REIJI!
HOW YA DOING, RUNT?!

PON PON
PLOD
PLOD
HEY, MIRUKA!
MIRU!

..YOU OUTGREW THESE OLD GLOVES.
HERE. I BOUGHT YOU SOME NEW ONES.
OWW!
YEAH, WELL...
I HAVE TO CHECK IN AT THE DORM BEFORE CURFEW.
BY THE WAY, I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.
FLAP
NO... NOT AGAIN
THAT SON OF A...

REALLY?!
I WON THE CONTEST.
I CAME TO TELL YOU, LIKE I PROMISED.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO THE NATIONALS AGAIN?!
OW OW OW!
REIJI, YOU'RE SO MEAN!
IS EVERYTHING OKAY?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I GUESS YOU'RE NOT COMING IN.
I'M FINE. SO IS MAMA.
JUST LIKE ALWAYS.
DUMB OL' PAPA YELLS A LOT, SAME AS USUAL.

SO YOU JUST TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
REIJI, I LOVE YOUR VIOLIN PLAYING.
I'M ALWAYS CHEERING FOR YOU.
I'M WAITING!
I'LL BE WAITING.
WAITING FOR YOU TO BECOME THE NUMBER ONE VIOLINIST.
WAITING FOR YOU TO COME GET ME IN A HELICOPTER.
SLAM
THANKS FOR THE GLOVES!

YOU... YOU DID THIS!
MIRUKA.
...WASN'T THAT ENOUGH?!
DOING IT TO ME...
COME INSIDE.
HE'LL HIT MAMA TOO!
MIRUKA! DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?
DON'T MAKE PAPA ANGRY! I CAN HANDLE IT!
REIJI, STOP!

EVERY TIME I GO HOME...
OR WORSE...
...I WONDER IF I'LL FIND THAT MIRUKA HAS BEEN KILLED...
FOR A TIME, I HAD TO QUIT THE VIOLIN.
DAD WAS GREEDY. WHEN THE MARKET CRASHED HE WENT BROKE.
THE VIOLIN WAS MY ONLY SWORD.
BUT USING MY TALENT, I COULD CONTINUE MY MUSIC AT HAKUTO.
NO ONE WILL HELP YOU IN THIS WORLD.
WITH THIS SWORD, I SWEAR I'LL PROTECT MIRUKA!

EVER SINCE I GOT INTO JUNIOR HIGH AND MOVED INTO THE DORMITORY...
...MY FATHER, SOAKED IN ALCOHOL AND OUT OF WORK...
...MADE MIRUKA HIS VICTIM.
EVEN THOUGH I'M A MAN...
...EVEN THOUGH I'M HER BIG BROTHER...
...MY HANDS ARE UNHURT.

SLAM...
KAORI..
I DID IT FOR REIJI.
..WAS ME.
THE ONE WHO TOLD HIM WHAT YOU DID..
...I'M GIVING IT BACK.
OH, AND THIS RING YOU GAVE ME...
I'M ALMOST LATE FOR CURFEW.
SHINOHARA SENSEI.
Hakuto Dormitory

Principal's Office
SHINOHARA SENSEI, YOU'LL BE PLACED ON LEAVE.
BUT, SIR...!
AFTER TODAY'S CONTEST, I SPOKE WITH SOMEONE.
I FOUND OUT WHAT YOU DID TO SAIOIN.
?!
SOMEONE MADE CRANK CALLS AND DAMAGED HIS INSTRUMENT.
BEEN RATHER BUSY, HAVEN'T YOU?
YOU GAVE HIM THE WRONG PIECE FOR THE CONTEST.
YOU DELIBERATELY TRIED TO SABOTAGE HIM.
YOU CONCENTRATE ON BEING A SOLOIST.
SHE'S A STUDENT OF MINE.
WE DON'T WANT TO MAKE THIS PUBLIC.
ABOUT SAIOIN ...
BUT FROM TODAY, I'M LEAVING HIM WITH THE NEW GUEST INSTRUCTOR.

SLASH
SHINO--
SHINOHARA!
HM?
WHAT'S GOING ON OUTSIDE?

I'M LEAVING HAKUTO.
HE SAID I SHOULD STICK TO BEING A SOLOIST.
SENSEI
KA
NOT FOR MONTHS NOW.
CH
BUT I CAN'T.
AK
MY FINGERS WON'T MOVE.
..SAIDIN.
IT'S YOUR FAULT—

I'LL KILL YOU, SAIOIN!
MY HANDS!
I NEED MY HANDS TO SAVE MIRAKU!
KRIK
I KNOW ABOUT THOSE SCANDALS OF YOURS!
KRIK
EVEN THEN I WANTED TO HELP YOU!
STOP IT!
IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT YOU GOT FIRED!

IT'S.. SHINO--
SHINOHARA SENSEI!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
WHAT'S HE DOING?!
TAKE A PICTURE! HURRY!
HELP!
YOU GOT ALL THE SPECIAL TREATMENT, DIDN'T YOU?!

THE MUSIC SPRUNG INTO MY HEART.
...IT WAS LIKE A BLACK AND WHITE MOVIE FLASHED AND TURNED INTO VIVID COLOR.
"YOUR SOUND...
BUT THIS PIECE...
...I'M TIRED OF THIS PIECE.
THE SONG I STAKED MY LIFE ON.
I CAN'T PLAY IT.
THE FEW MEASURES YOU PLAYED SO CARELESSLY... THEY CRUSHED MY SOUL.
SOMEHOW, I JUST CAN'T DO IT LIKE THAT.
...NOW, NOTHING. I CAN'T HEAR ANY OF IT!
THEN I DECIDED TO SABOTAGE YOU.
...AS I TAUGHT YOU WITH A SMILE...
EVER SINCE THEN...
...I REMEMBERED IT OVER AND OVER.
THE MUSIC THAT HAD ONCE FILLED MY SOUL.

"SOMEDAY YOU'LL BE WRAPPED UP IN BEAUTIFUL MUSIC.
"MUSIC HAS THE POWER TO SOOTHE THE HUMAN HEART.
"SHINOHARA.
JUST LIKE MY TEACHER TAUGHT ME
YOU'VE WON THE CONTEST, SHINOHARA!
CONGRATULATIONS!
"I WANT YOU TO SHARE THAT WITH PEOPLE."
IS THIS THE PIECE I SHOULD USE IN THE CONTEST?
BUT THIS PIECE...
...I CAN TEACH TO YOU THOROUGHLY.
I WON A CONTEST WITH IT MYSELF.
I LEARNED THIS FOR MY FIRST RECITAL.
SHOULDN'T I USE SOMETHING ELSE?

I USE OTHER PEOPLE
I STEP ON OTHER PEOPLE TO GET AHEAD I DON'T THINK TWICE ABOUT IT.
ACTUALLY, I GET OFF ON IT.
THE MORE I EAT OTHERS' HEARTS...
IT NURTURES ME.

BAK
AND NOW YOU. AND KAORI.
WHAM
I COULD SENSE IT FROM YOUR ATTITUDE.
TO PROTECT MYSELF FROM YOUR DIRTY TRICKS.
GO
GOBO
KAORI TAUGHT ME THE ASSIGNED PIECE YESTERDAY.
IT WAS HARD TO LEARN THE PIECE IN ONE NIGHT, EVEN FOR ME.
THE BEST DEFENSE WAS TO USE YOUR WOMAN.
GOBO
GOBO

...THE BETTER MUSIC I MAKE.
CLAMP
WH
OH
AAAAGH!

NOT FIT TO PLAY THIS..
BUT HER OVER THERE
..SHE IS THE ONLY THING I SEE CLEARLY.
WHO IS THAT GIRL?
MY EYES...I CAN'T SEE..
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S NOT FIT.
YOU...
WHO ARE YOU?

YOU'RE NOT..
..FIT TO PLAY...
..THE VIOLIN.
SENSEI! SENSEI!
FLASH
THE POLICE ARE HERE!
CALL AN AMBULANCE!

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE HEARD IT SO CLEARLY.

THANK GOODNESS.
A STRANGER'S VOICE.
BOTH YOUR HANDS ARE UNHURT.

Opus 2 Setting Sail

Opus 1 Enfants Terribles – End

GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, BOY!
A FEW DAYS LATER AT HAKUTO...
WITH ALL THAT BLOOD LOSS, WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
BUT YOU MADE IT BACK IN TIME FOR THE WINTER SEMINAR STARTING TOMORROW.
THE WINTER SEMINAR...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MAESTRO.

...I MET A WOMAN.
MULTIPLE CONTUSIONS ON THE CHEST AND ARMS!
THAT NIGHT...
PREP FOR TRANSFUSION!
HE'S GOT HEAVY BLEEDING FROM THE HEAD AND NECK!
...MY VERY FIRST IMPRESSION OF HER WAS...
AS THE AMBULANCE PULLED AWAY FROM HER...
ALERT THE EMERGENCY ROOM!
IT WAS LIKE WINTER CAMELLIAS...
BLOOD HAD SPILLED INTO MY EYES.
...WERE BLOOMING ALL OVER THE PLACE.
HUH?
...WHAT A GAUDY WOMAN.

THE SENIOR CONDUCTOR OF THE GREATEST SOURCE OF REVENUE FOR THE SCHOOL, THE HAKUTO PHILHARMONIC.
THE GRIM REAPER.
MAESTRO MARCO PRIMAVERA
THE GOLDEN EAGLE, RAISED THE WORLD OVER
THAT MEANS YOU'LL BE OUT OF SCHOOL.
NOT EVEN THE PRINCIPAL DARES TO CHALLENGE HIM.
EVERYONE ACKNOWLEDGES YOU'RE THE NUMBER ONE VIOLINIST IN THE SCHOOL.
BUT..
THIS GENTLE-LOOKING FACE HAS, UNTIL NOW, CRUSHED THE CAREERS OF THOUSANDS OF MUSICIANS.
EVERY TIME YOU APPEAR IN THE JAPAN NATIONAL CONTEST..
..THERE'S INEVITABLY A SHOWER OF BLOOD.

FOR THE TWELVE DAYS OF WINTER BREAK, EACH STUDENT GETS AN INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTOR.
SPECIAL INSTRUCTION FROM MORNING TO NIGHT.
IT'S FOR THE BEST EIGHT STUDENTS FROM EACH SECTION* WHO SURVIVE THE SCHOOL CONTEST.
AND WHO ARE AIMING TO WIN THE NATIONAL CONTEST.
* PIANO, VIOLIN, FLUTE AND VOICE
SO I'M SPEAKING TO YOU IN HIS PLACE.
WELL!
THE PRINCIPAL IS OUT OF TOWN FOR THE DAY.
YOUR SCHOLARSHIP FROM HAKUTO WILL BE CUT.
IF YOU DON'T WIN THE COMING JAPANESE NATIONAL CONTEST..
EIGHTH GRADER, SAIOIN REIJI.

I'LL OVER-COME ANY OBSTACLE!
I UNDER-STAND.
FOR MY SISTER MIRAKU, WHO IS WAITING ALONE FOR THE DAY I'LL COME GET HER.
I'LL SHOW YOU I CAN WIN!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE IN THE CONTEST..
I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE NEW TEACHER.
..THE RULES ARE THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO HAVE A PRIVATE INSTRUCTOR!
SHE'S AN ALUM OF HAKUTO, AND A STUDENT OF MINE.
BAM

LIKE LAST YEAR, ON THE STAGE.
IN FRONT OF A FULL HOUSE.
HIS SICKLE OF DEATH...
IS NOW POINTED AT ME.
AND THE YEAR BEFORE THAT, HERE AT THE SCHOOL.
SO EITHER WIN OR GO HOME. WE'LL CLEAN UP THE DETAILS LATER.
YOU CAN ONLY GET AWAY WITH THAT IF YOU'RE A CHAMPION.
YOU SOIL HAKUTO'S NAME, AND DAMAGE ITS REPUTATION.
YOU WILL ALWAYS BETRAY PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS AT THE LAST MOMENT.
ALL THE FACULTY AGREED ON THIS.
SO GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT, SON.
♡
SO YOU'RE TALKING..
..ABOUT FINDING MY REPLACE-MENT?

OH, SO YOU'VE MET?
HA HA HA
SAIOIN!
LET'S START WITH A...
"THANK GOODNESS."
"BOTH YOUR HANDS ARE UNHURT."
THE OTHER NIGHT.
THAT WAS YOU.
TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES AND SHOW ME YOUR BODY!
M!--
MITSUKO! STOP THAT!
THAT'S HARASS-MENT!
GAH!
KUK
KUK
SAIOIN!

I'M MITSUKO HANE.
I THINK YOU REMEMBER ME

HE'LL DO, MAESTRO!
YOU HAVE GOOD FINGERS.
WITH THIS, YOU CAN PRODUCE VOLUME AS GOOD AS A WESTERNERS.
THE THUMB IS SHORT WITH A THICK BONE.
IF THIS WILL GET ME INTO THE JAPAN NATIONALS...
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, HANE SENSEI.
I'LL USE ANYTHING I HAVE TO.
I DON'T CARE WHO THIS WOMAN IS.

WOMEN LOVE A PRETTY FACE. TAKE CARE OF IT.
LOOKS LIKE THE WOUND ON YOUR FACE IS ALMOST HEALED.
YOU'RE SKINNY, BUT YOU'RE IN GOOD SHAPE.
YOUR TRICEPS ARE OKAY.
AND YOUR DELTOID, THE WOUND JUST MISSED IT.
WHEN THE SWELLING IN YOUR BACK GOES DOWN, WE'LL START WORKING OUT AT THE GYM.
THE MASTOID IS ALSO OKAY.

YOW!
SHUT UP, MEATHEAD!
DON'T WORRY. THEY WON'T BOTHER YOU AGAIN.
WOW, NACHI!
I'M TRAINING THEM!
HIT 'EM AGAIN! HIT 'EM HARDER!
REIJI!
POPULAR GIRL.
HEY.
THE WORST GUY OF THEM ALL!
SAIOIN.
I SAW YOUR NEW WOMAN.
SO YOU'RE HERE, TOO.

ALL RIGHT, SAIOIN.
SO TO THE SEMINAR HALL AND GET UNPACKED.
THE OTHER STUDENTS ARE ALREADY THERE.
IT'S BEEN A YEAR SINCE I WAS HERE LAST.
EVEN THOUGH IT'S A SEMINAR, MOST OF THE TIME IS SPENT IN PRIVATE PRACTICE. THE STUDENTS ALMOST NEVER SPEAK TO EACH OTHER.
NACHI!
I DON'T GET THE HOMEWORK!
ME NEITHER. CAN YOU HELP US?
SORRY FOR BOTHERING YOU AT THE SEMINAR.
You really put your heart into it.
IT'S OKAY. JUST FOR TODAY.
BE QUIET AND GET OUT OF HERE.
NOBODY BUT THE CONTEST WINNERS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE.
THIS IS THE FOURTEENTH SCARF THIS YEAR!
THAT'S HOW OLD I AM!

THE MUSIC I LOVE, PART 2

OTHER SONGS I REALLY LIKE ARE:
"PAVANE POUR UNE INFANTE DEFUNTE" (RAVEL)
"FANTASIA ON GREENSLEEVES" (VAUGH-WILLIAMS)
"MEDITATION FROM THAIS" (MASSENET)
"CONCERTO FOR HARPSICHORD" (BACH)

BUT ACTUALLY, CLASSICAL MUSIC MAKES ME SLEEPY. FOR EXAMPLE, SOMETIMES I TRY TO REALLY CONCENTRATE AND LISTEN TO A MOVING SYMPHONY. BUT NO MATTER HOW GREAT I THINK IT IS, TWENTY MINUTES INTO IT I FALL ASLEEP. THAT'S WHY, FOR NOW, I LIKE TO GET COMPILATION CD'S WITH SHORT WORKS. THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME!

I REALLY LIKE MELANCHOLY, STIRRING WORKS. THEY MAKE ME IMAGINE ALL SORTS OF THINGS! BUT EVEN THOUGH I'M A TOTAL AMATEUR, THERE'S ONE SONG I LIKED FROM A LONG TIME AGO-- ONE SPECIAL SONG. "SCHEHERAZADE" BY RIMSKY-KARSAKOV! I FIRST HEARD THIS SONG ABOUT SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS AGO.

CONTINUED IN PART 3

A CORNER ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL.
WHOMP
WHAT'S THIS BAGGAGE?
IS THIS ALL HANE SENSEI'S STUFF DUMPED HERE?
KACHACK
THERE'S ONLY A DOOR BETWEEN US.
PRETTY CARELESS TO LEAVE THIS OPEN.
SHE LEFT THE INNER DOOR OPEN.

THEY RAN OUT SHINOHARA.
WILL YOU GET MUCH PRACTICING DONE?
I WONDER IF THEY'LL MAKE KAORI SENSEI QUIT NEXT?
WE'LL HAVE ROOMS RIGHT NEXT TO YOURS, SO INTRODUCE ME!
!
I'LL NEVER REMEMBER THEIR NAMES OR FACES NO MATTER HOW MANY YEARS PASS.
..I DON'T EVEN HEAR IT.
OH, THE MOANING OF THOSE GUYS WHO CAN'T PLAY FOR CRAP...
WHY DON'T YOU SAY SOMETHING TO THEM?
TELL THEM TO KEEP THEIR TRAPS SHUT.
EXCEPT FOR NACHI, ANYWAY.

CLUNK
TINY ROOM
WHAT'S WITH THIS ROOM?!
IT'S LIKE VERSAILLES.
AND ALL THE PHOTOS ARE OF HANE SENSEI!
MAYBE THIS IS SOME FRANK.
I'LL ASK HER!
SHE MUST STILL BE IN THE OFFICE!
SOMEBODY'S TRYING TO MAKE A JOKE OUT OF MY NEW TEACHER.
AH!
WHP
KA

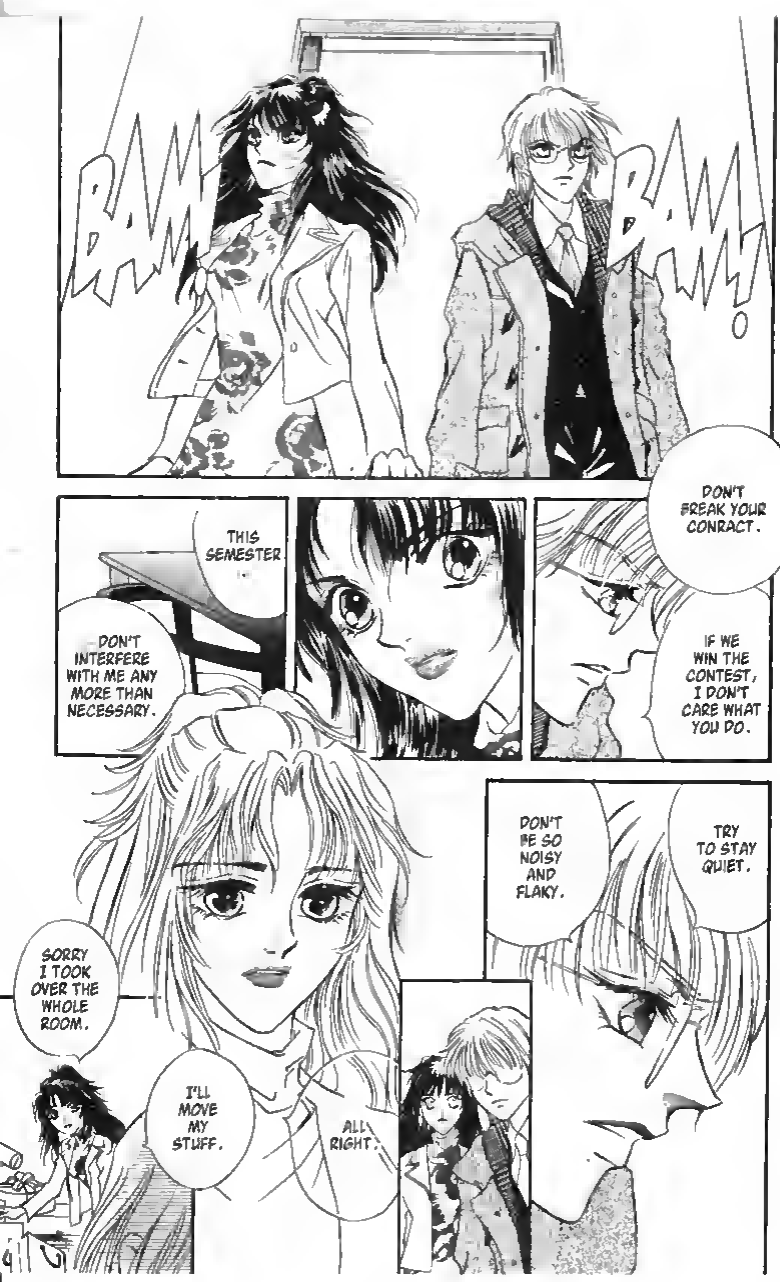
BA
DUM
!!
BA
BAD
UM
WHA
--?!
DAD
UM

WHOOSH
IF SAIDIN DOESN'T WIN, YOU DON'T GET PAID!
NOW...?
GASP
YOU CAN'T TELL ME THAT NOW!
WAIT A MINUTE!
IN ..
WHAT DID YOU BUY?
ARE YOU SAYING YOU ALREADY SPENT.
SHOCK
WHY ARE YOU SO PANICKED?
THERE'S THIS..
THE SOUTH PACIFIC.
I'LL TELL YOU IF YOU DON'T GET MAD.
IN THE
...THE MONEY YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PAID YET?

Office
MITSUKO! CUT IT OUT!
SAY UNCLE!
IT'S A SUBMISSION HOLD IN CASE I MEET A PERVERT OR A ROBBER
I NEED TO PRACTICE IT UNTIL I REMEMBER IT!
STOP IT! I'VE GOT A CONCERT TO GO TO!
I LEARNED THIS FROM SOME MARINES I MET IN VEGAS!
WHOA ..
HANE...
GULP GULP
A SINGLE WOMAN HAS GOTTA KNOW HOW TO DEFEND HERSELF.
AND YOU'VE GOTTEN A BIT OLD, MAESTRO.
I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU, HANE.
YOU SPENT ALL YOUR MONEY ON THAT GAUDY FURNITURE.
PUT YOUR NEXT CHECK IN THE BANK PLEASE?
BUT I JUST LOVE SHOPPING ♡

POVERTY RUBS OFF!
DON'T TOUCH ME.

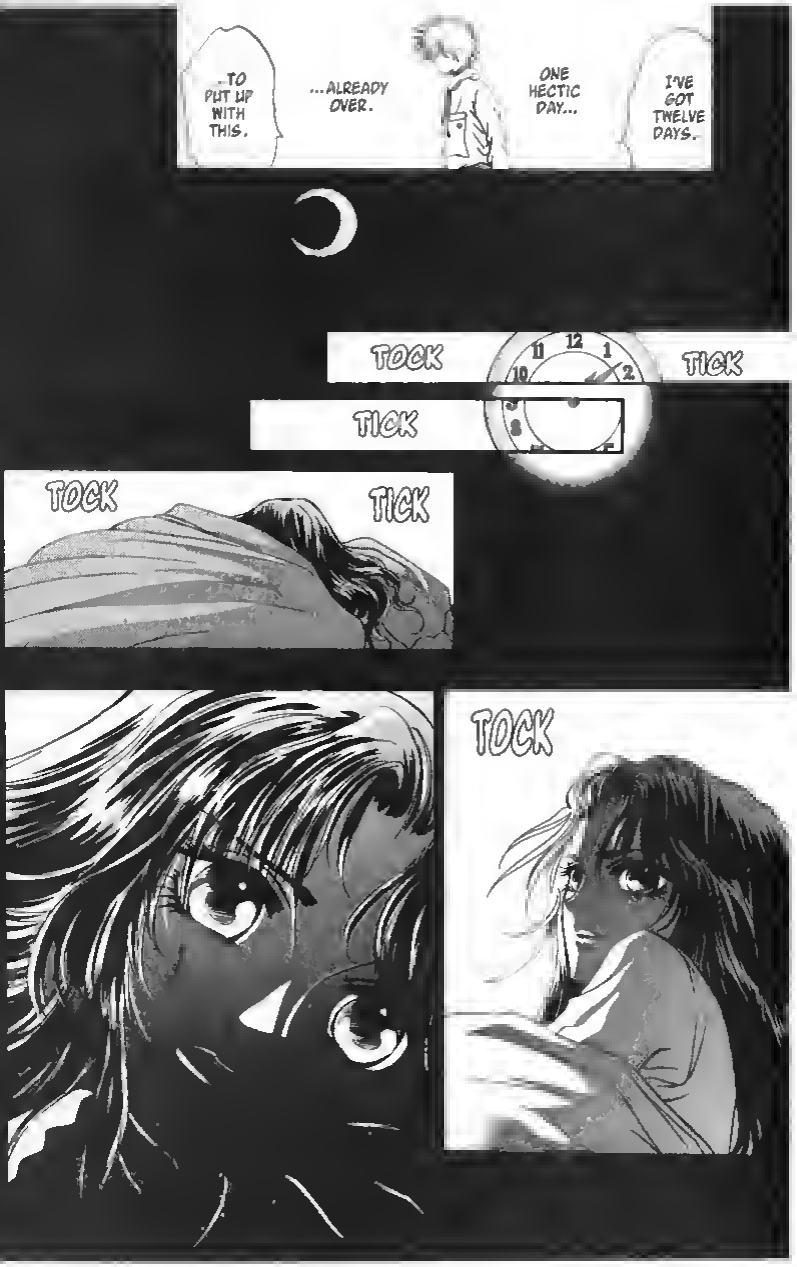
SHUU...
...THIS SMALL ISLAND!
IF SAIOIN DOESN'T WIN THE CONTEST, YOU WON'T JUST BE BROKE! YOU'LL BE BANKRUPT!
AN ISLAND?!
YOU'RE ALREADY TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS OLD! WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO LEARN TO THINK?!
CANCEL THAT SALE RIGHT NOW!
BUT I ALREADY BOUGHT A SWIMSUIT!
!!
WAAH!


BAM!
BAM!
DON'T BREAK YOUR CONRACT.
IF WE WIN THE CONTEST, I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO.
THIS SEMESTER
DON'T INTERFERE WITH ME ANY MORE THAN NECESSARY.
TRY TO STAY QUIET.
DON'T BE SO NOISY AND FLAKY.
SORRY I TOOK OVER THE WHOLE ROOM.
I'LL MOVE MY STUFF.
ALL RIGHT.

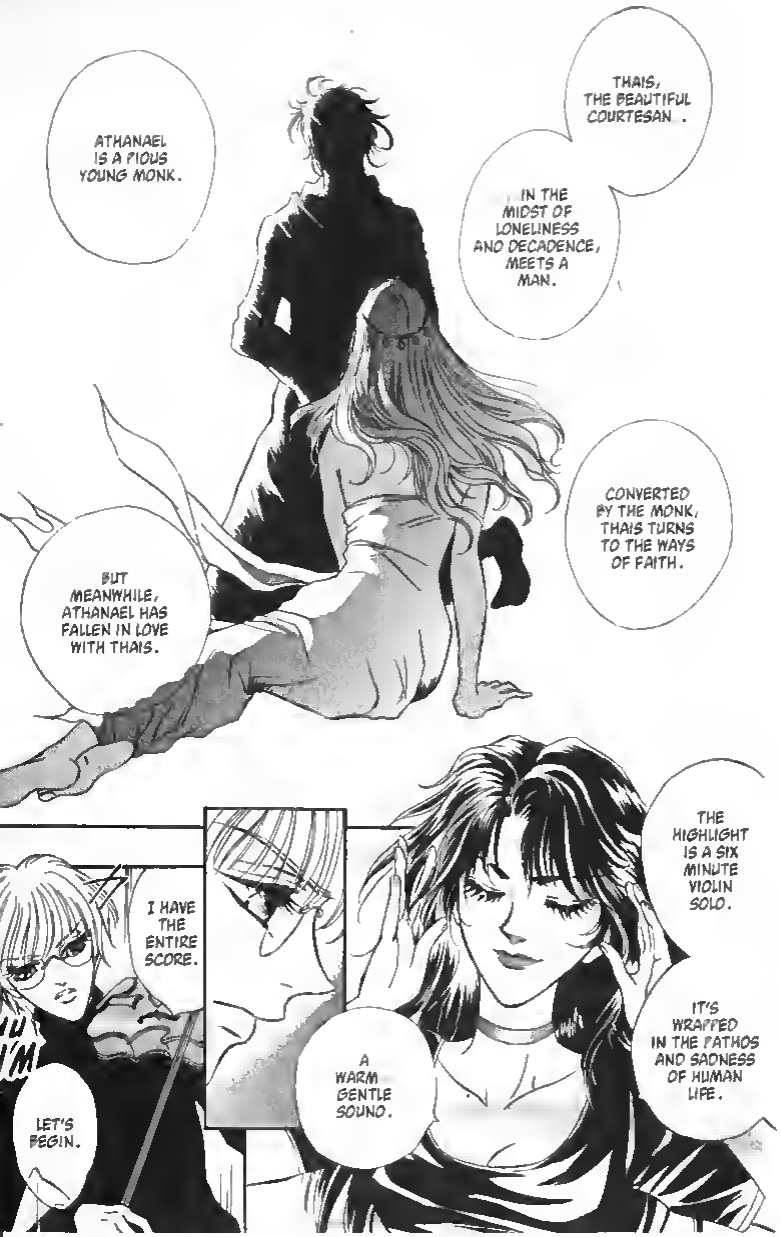
WHOSE LINE IS THAT?
BOÖ-!
WAIT A MINUTE, PUNK!
SHUT UP!
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING! I CAN'T BREAK THIS CONTRACT!
I CAN'T STAND IRRESPONSIBLE IDIOTS! YOU'RE THE DREGS OF SOCIETY!
IF I'M NOT HERE, YOU DON'T COMPETE IN THE CONTEST!
YEAH, REALLY
DREGS
HE REALLY KNOWS HOW TO MAKE GIRLS CRY.
WHY'D THEY PUT HER ON ME?!
PUT THAT IGNORANT WENCH...!
THE GUYS ON TOP REALLY WANT TO DRIVE ME OUT!
CRAP!

CLOSE THAT DOOR!
SLAM
THEY WERE IN A BOX THAT WAS A PARTING GIFT FROM A KID I TAUGHT IN AMERICA.
CLOSE THE DOOR! QUICK!
THAT ROOM...
THERE'S A SWARM OF GRASS-HOPPERS IN THERE!
THE ONE IN MY HAIR.
GET THAT ONE.
G-GE..
FLUTTER FLUTTER
AND GET THE REST OF THEM!
FLUTTER
HURRY!

NYAA NYAA NYAA
EITHER WAY, IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM.
HOW COME SHE ONLY USES HER RIGHT HAND?
SHE'S SURE TAKING HER TIME.
KYAAAAAAH!
BAM
STARTING TODAY, I LIVE IN HERE!
DRIP DRIP


...TO PUT UP WITH THIS.
...ALREADY OVER.
ONE HECTIC DAY...
I'VE GOT TWELVE DAYS.
TOCK
TICK
TICK
TOCK
TICK
TOCK

GYAAAH!
FWAP
AH.
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH SEEING MY LEGS...
WHAM
...YOU GOT ANOTHER THING COMING!
WHAT'D I DO?
I'M GOING TO BED.
FLAP
I'M NOT GOING BACK INTO THAT ROOM UNTIL ALL THE GRASSHOPPERS ARE DEAD! GOT IT?!
I'M EMOTIONALLY EXHAUSTED!
FUM FUM
BUT THAT'S MY...


ATHANAEL IS A PIOUS YOUNG MONK.
THAIS, THE BEAUTIFUL COURTESAN..
..IN THE MIDST OF LONELINESS AND DECADENCE, MEETS A MAN.
CONVERTED BY THE MONK, THAIS TURNS TO THE WAYS OF FAITH.
BUT MEANWHILE, ATHANAEL HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THAIS.
I HAVE THE ENTIRE SCORE.
LET'S BEGIN.
A WARM GENTLE SOUND.
THE HIGHLIGHT IS A SIX MINUTE VIOLIN SOLO.
IT'S WRAPPED IN THE PATHOS AND SADNESS OF HUMAN LIFE.

..THAT THE MOON IS STARING AT ME.
I HAVE A DREAM..
THE PRE-LIMINARIES FOR THE JAPAN NATIONAL CONTEST ARE MARCH SIXTH.
AND THE SELECTED PIECE IS..
YOU'LL NEED CONCEN-TRATED PRACTICE.
TWELVE DAYS FROM TODAY.
..."MEDITATION FROM THAIS," BY MASSENET.
CLICK
THE STORY IS SET.
..IN FOURTH CENTURY EGYPT.
"THAIS," FIRST PERFORMED AT THE PARIS OPERA IN 1894.

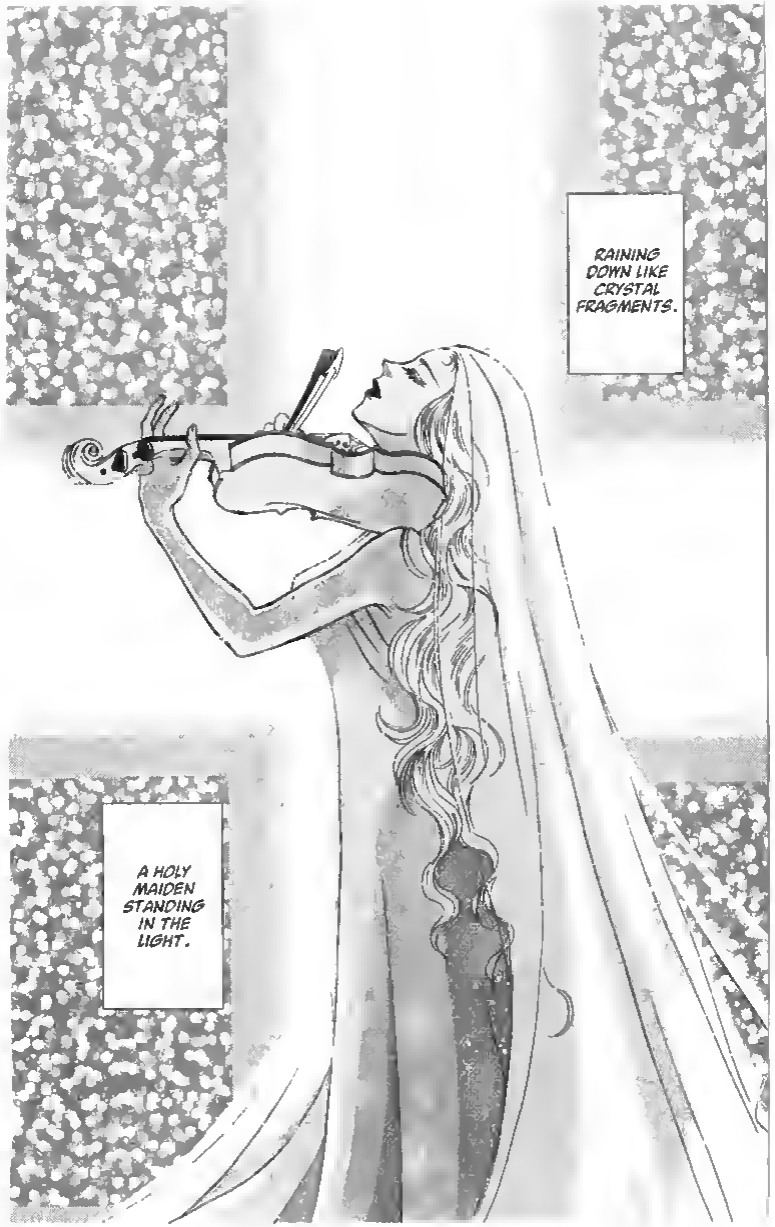
YOU DON'T SAY THAT BECAUSE YOU HATE IT.
INSTEAD OF PLAYING THE SAME BORING THING AGAIN, ISN'T IT BETTER TO STAND OUT A BIT?
I HATE SLEEPY SONGS LIKE THIS ONE.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU CAN'T PLAY IT.
..OF PERSONALITY.
IT'S A PROBLEM.
IF YOU'RE SLEEPY, TAKE A NAP!
I'LL PLAY IT!

WHAT A MISERABLE MAN.
FALL TO THE BOTTOM OF THE ABYSS.
WOMEN NO LONGER LOOK UPON YOU
YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORGOTTEN BY ALL
WRITHE IN AGONY BY YOURSELF.
FALL AWAY FROM THIS BEAUTIFUL WORLD.
THAT'S MY OWN "THAIS."
DO YOU THINK THIS IS A GAME?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, CHANGING THE ARRANGEMENT?!
YOU'VE LOST THE WARMTH COMPLETELY!
WHAM!
STOP!

SHE SOON BECOMES LIKE A FOREIGN WOMAN..
.. FLYING DOWN ON THE VIOLIN.

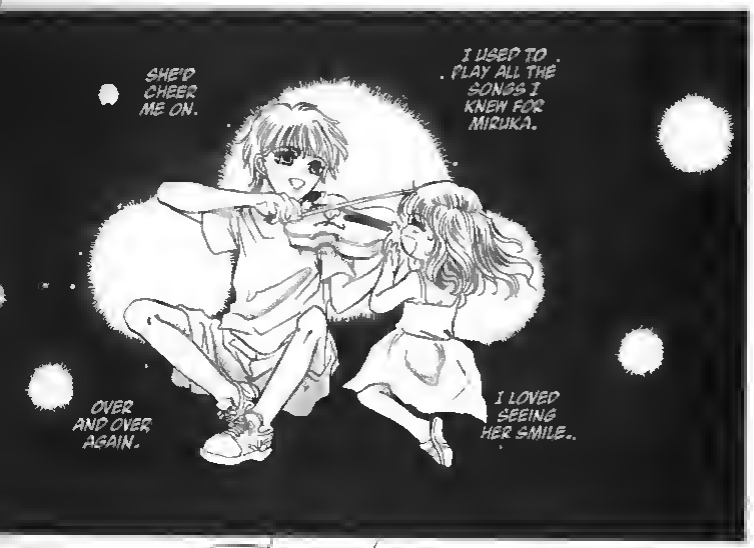
THIS WOMAN...
VREEM
HER RIGHT HAND HOLDING THE BOW
IS LIKE THE WING OF A GREAT BIRD.

THAIS...?
KNOWING THAT SOON SHE'LL BE PARTING FROM HIM.
EMBRACING THE VIOLIN...
...IT'S LIKE HER PRECIOUS LOVER.
GAZING.
WHISPERING.
AT SOME POINT, I GOT SUCKED INTO HER MUSIC.
"IT'S NO USE MAKING THAT FACE."
"YOU MUST CAST AWAY THAT MAN, THAIS."
BUH


RAINING DOWN LIKE CRYSTAL FRAGMENTS.
A HOLY MAIDEN STANDING IN THE LIGHT.

DON'T COME BACK UNTIL YOU COOL YOUR HEAD.
SILVER
HUFF
CRASH
HUFF
HUFF
STOP!
DAMN IT!

TECHNIQUE ISN'T FOR WINNING CONTESTS.
IT'S FOR MAKING THE AUDIENCE FEEL THE HEART OF THE PIECE.
IT'S ABOUT FEELING.
SHE STOPPED BEFORE THE CLIMAX.
THE PERFORMER'S DUTY IS TO FAITHFULLY REPRODUCE THE COMPOSER'S VISION.
"THAIS" IS ABOUT FORGIVENESS AND FORGIVING.
ESPECIALLY IN THIS PIECE.
I KNOW ABOUT YOUR TROUBLES.
I HEARD YOU LOST THE JAPAN NATIONAL COMPETITION.
BUT THE WAY YOU'RE GOING NOW....
..YOU'LL FALL STRAIGHT DOWN AGAIN.


SHE'D CHEER ME ON.
I USED TO PLAY ALL THE SONGS I KNEW FOR MIRUKA.
OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
I LOVED SEEING HER SMILE..

BUT WHEN HE GOT HOME, DAD WOULD PRACTICALLY BEAT ME TO DEATH.
NO MATTER WHAT I PLAYED, OR HOW MANY TIMES I PLAYED.
NOTHING EVER CHANGED.
IF I CAN'T PLAY TO SATISFY HANE, I LOSE.
WHAT'LL I DO?
FOR A LONG TIME, I STOPPED PLAYING FOR MY SISTER.
SO THAT'S WHY.
THAT'S WHY I CAN'T LEAVE THINGS LIKE THIS.

SHE SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME.
KA KRA KRAA
CRAP.
UP UNTIL NOW, I'VE FOOLED EVERY TEACHER WITH MY TECHNIQUE.
GAAAA
TECH-NIQUE
THAT'S ALL.
WHEN I WAS A KID..
THINGS STARTED TO FALL APART AT HOME.
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.
YOU SAY MUSIC HAS THAT POWER?
"TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE."
"WARM THEIR HEARTS, WITH THAIS."

TAP
TAP
A FACE LIKE I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
EYES LIKE ICE.
BUT WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH OF CONFUSION OR HESITATION
THE PROUD ICE QUEEN.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
IT MAKES MY FINGERS ACHE
SLAM
Took 2nd place at the Paganini International Competition the following year...1st place.
Nakutu Gakuen Elementary School 5th grade 1st win at the Japan National.
Won again the following year.
Student of Karo Primavera.
Mitsuko Nana.
Flooded with invitations to play with national orchestras.

WHASH
IN THE MOUNTAIN OF MATERIALS ABOUT HAKUTO ALUMNI.
...I FOUND HANE'S RECORDINGS AND PROFILE.
LISTENING ROOM NO. 1
HERE IT COMES!
FOUR-TEEN YEARS OLD.
WHEN SHE WAS THE SAME AGE AS ME.
Mitsuko Nana
Hakuto Gakuen Junior High School, 2nd Year.
Footage from Japan National Competition.
Won the contest two years in a row performing Paganini's "Concerto for Violin No. 1."
THAT GIRL WAS THE TOP OF THE ELITE!
TWO YEARS IN A ROW?!

YOU'RE NOT FORCING IT, ARE YOU?
WHEN I CAME TO CHECK ON YOU, YOU WERE CRADLING YOUR LEFT ARM.
DID YOU HURT IT AGAIN?
IT'S GOTTEN MUCH EASIER, MAESTRO.
I CAN'T GET LAZY ABOUT PRACTICING.
I SEE.
BE CAREFUL.
IF WE LOSE YOU.
EVERY DAY I'M PRACTICING A LITTLE BIT MORE.
...OVER THESE FOURTEEN YEARS.
I'VE HAD SO MANY OPERATIONS ON MY LEFT ARM.
TODAY I PLAYED ALMOST TWO SECTIONS.
DON'T MAKE THAT FACE.

...she damaged her left arm in an accident.
Just before the Japanese Nationals, days before her fifteenth birthday...
...medical examiners determined she would never play again.
DON'T SURPRISE ME...
.. LIKE THAT ..
No further information about her whereabouts.

EVEN THOUGH I FLED FROM THE VIOLIN AND FACED THAT AWFUL EXPERI-ENCE.
...I FIGURED OUT TOO LATE THAT I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT THE VIOLIN.
BUT AT LEAST I COULD STILL WORK WITH MUSIC.
THERE WERE CHILDREN ALL OVER THE WORLD WHO YEARNED TO LEARN MUSIC, BUT HAD NO WAY.
BUT HERE.
. IS THERE REALLY SOME-THING..
. I'M NEEDED FOR?

YOU CAME BACK FOR THAT BOY.
FINALLY, AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS

CREAK.

THAT PLACE IT HAPPENED.
THE DAY.
I CAN NEVER FORGET THAT ACCIDENT.
THE THINGS I SAW.
MY ARM WAS BURNING LIKE A TORCH!

I'LL SUPPORT YOUR LEFT ARM.
HOLD THE BOW.
SAI--
THAIS.
THE MEDITATION.

ZA
A
A
A
A
...THIS ARM..
THIS...
GICHI
GICHI
GICHI
I BEGGED YOU,TO RETURN IT THE WAY IT WAS!
DAMN YOU, GOD!

IF I COULD JUST PLAY LIKE THIS ONCE."
MIRUKA.
..THEN PERHAPS YOU'D SMILE FOR ME AGAIN.
ALL OF IT.
SILVER
I PLAYED IT...
I PLAYED IT ALL.
SILVER

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.
A SOFT, CHILDLIKE SMILE.
A LAUGHING PERSON.
A HUMAN FACE SO JOYFUL OVER A VIOLIN.
SO HARD TO PLAY...
AND THE SOUNDS BOUNCING SO LIGHTLY INTO THE AIR.
BUT NOT AS ANGRY.
MORE SHAKY THAN USUAL.
THE SOUND IS DIFFERENT THAN USUAL.
PRACTICE ROOM?
SAIOIN'S ..

SAIOIN!! WAIT!!
HUH?
FHEEW
I JUST DECIDED THAT I CAN BELIEVE IN YOU!
SO NOW YOU MUST BELIEVE IN ME!
TOGETHER WITH ME..
...PLAY THE VIOLIN!
WIN THE JAPANESE NATIONALS! YOU CAN DO IT!

. LIKE THIS.
. FOR SO LONG..
FOR..
I WANTED TO PLAY LIKE THIS.
GASP
WHY DID I DO SOMETHING THIS FOOLISH?
I HAVEN'T PLAYED THAT BADLY...
...SINCE I WAS A CHILD

AIMING FOR THE JAPAN NATIONALS IN THE SPRING, OUR WINTER SEMINAR.
IT WAS AS THOUGH NOTHING HAD HAPPENED.
THE START OF THE SECOND DAY.
Opus 3
Events of a Beautiful Night

NOT INTERESTED.
I'LL LET YOU FINISH YOUR CONTRACT, BUT NOTHING MORE.
ARE YOU SAYING YOU WANT ME TO LIVE OUT YOUR DREAM FOR YOU?
AND SO, OUR BATTLE,
...HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN.
Opus 2 Setting Sail -- End

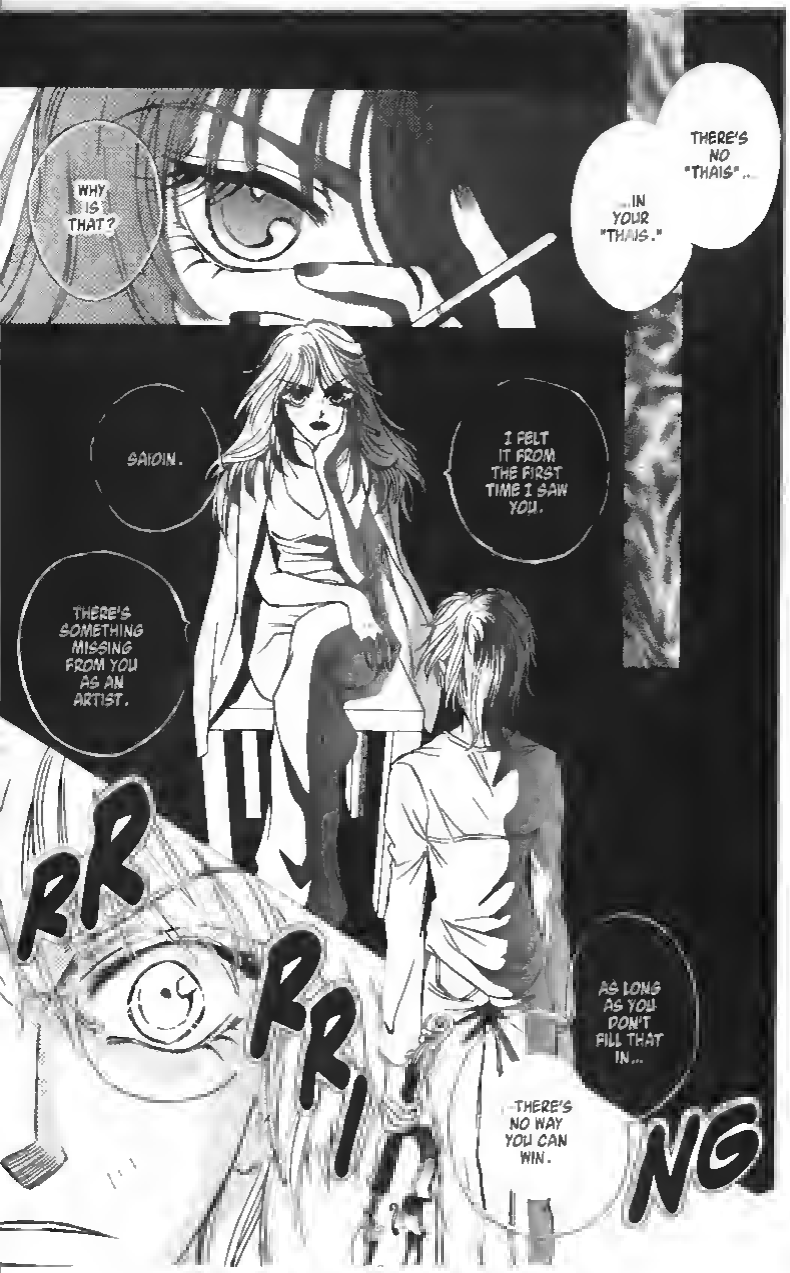
THEN SHE PICKED UP HER BAGS AND SHUT HERSELF IN HER ROOM.
SHE WIPED OUT THE CRICKETS AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT.
WHEN WE GOT BACK TO THE DORM, SHE GRABBED A FLYSWATTER.
DA DA DA DA DA DA DA
SHUDDER SHUDDER SHUDDER
WHAM
GYAAAH!
THIS EVENING WAS PRETTY WILD.
on the other side of the wall.
HOW WAS THAT?
HANE SENSEI?
I'VE GOT NO TIME TO MESS AROUND WITH SOME STRANGER'S NEEDLESS EXPECTATIONS.
I DON'T REGRET WHAT I SAID.

AFTER THAT...
TOGETHER WITH ME. PLAY THE VIOLIN!
I JUST DECIDED THAT I CAN BELIEVE IN YOU!
NOT INTERESTED.
ARE YOU SAYING YOU WANT ME TO LIVE OUT YOUR DREAM FOR YOU?
SO NOW YOU MUST BELIEVE IN ME!
...HANE DIDN'T SAY A WORD.

COLLECTING FURS

TO CUT TO THE POINT, I HAVE A REQUEST FOR YOU ALL! I REALLY LOVE ANIMALS. I PARTICULARLY LIKE THE CUTE FUZZY ONES. WHEN I WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AFTER CLASSES I WOULD GO TO THE VEGETABLE MARKET AND GET OLD VEGETABLES AND BRING THEM BACK TO FEED THE RABBITS AND CHICKENS WE KEPT AT SCHOOL.

I WANTED TO HAVE ALL KINDS OF PETS. BUT MY HAMSTER DIED IN AN ACCIDENT THE FIRST DAY I HAD HIM. I HAD MY DAD BUILD A HOUSE FOR MY SQUIRREL, BUT JUST AS HE FINISHED, IT RAN AWAY INTO THE BAMBOO FIELD. MY CANARY GOT EATEN BY A SNAKE. MY DOG GOT HIT BY A CAR. AND TO TOP IT OFF, MY FISH BOWL BROKE. I STILL AVOID FISH BOWLS. I GUESS I'VE GOT BAD LUCK WITH ANIMALS. SO I WANT EVERYONE TO SEND ME PICTURES OF YOUR FAVORITE PETS (AND WRITE THEIR NAMES ON IT, TOO). I'VE REALLY ENJOYED THE ONES I'VE RECEIVED. —♥


WHY IS THAT?
THERE'S NO "THAIS"... ...IN YOUR "THAIS."
SAIOIN.
I FELT IT FROM THE FIRST TIME I SAW YOU.
THERE'S SOMETHING MISSING FROM YOU AS AN ARTIST.
RR RRI NG
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T FILL THAT IN...
THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN WIN.

SHAKE SHAKE
HAN EE!
SORRY ABOUT THAT, SAIOIN.
I'M A LITTLE SLEEPY TODAY.
BUT I WAS LISTENING REALLY!
YOUR "THAIS" DOESN'T EXPRESS ANYTHING
THIS TIME I PLAYED ACCORDING TO THE SCORE!
I OBEYED THE COMPOSER'S DIRECTIONS JUST LIKE YOU SAID!
YOU'RE NOT CONVINCING ME YOU WANT TO DO THIS.
IT STILL SOUNDS LIKE YOU'R TOTALLY BORED WITH THIS PIECE.
CLICK

Miruka?
REIJI...
I UM
I just wanted to hear your voice.
I'll go off to school now promise
CLICK
Sorry to call during practice

RRRRING
PRACTICE ROOM 4. YES.
HELLO?
YES, PLEASE.
RRRRING
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
IT'S FROM YOUR SISTER.
MIRUKA?
YOU SHOULD BE IN SCHOOL. WHERE ARE YOU?
NO, IT'S OKAY.

WAIT!
HANE!
WHAT ABOUT PRACTICE?
I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF SOME THING
PRACTICE BY YOURSELF FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.
STARTING TOMORROW, EVERY NIGHT I WANT TO LISTEN TO YOU PERFORM IT ONCE BEFORE BED.
DON'T DISAPPOINT ME, SAIOIN
SORRY THAT IT'S THE BORING "THAIS."

MIRUKA...
UP TILL NOW, SHE'S NEVER ASKED ME FOR ANYTHING, AND NEVER CALLED ME.
WHAT IS IT?
IT'S NOT YOUR PROBLEM!
LET'S GET BACK TO PRACTICE.
I CAN'T LEAVE HERE NOW.
.. I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO REALLY HELP MIRUKA.
IF I DON'T WIN THE CONTEST..
.....!

NACHI!
REIJI?!
I NEED A FAVOR FROM YOU.
WHAT IS IT? ARE YOU PRACTICING BY YOURSELF?

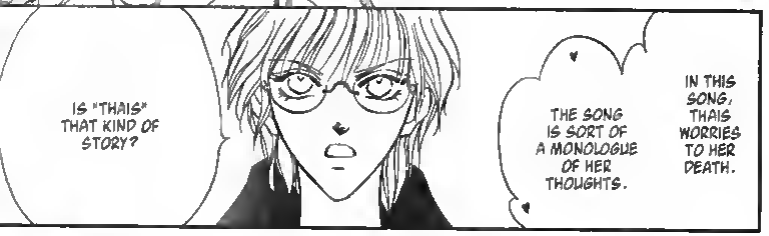
WE'LL BE DONE SOON.
HEY! WHAT ABOUT MY LUNCH?
IT'S GONNA GET COLD!
HERE! PLAY THIS!

VROOM
HANE!
YEAH, I SAW. SOMETIME AROUND NOON.
THAT MEAN'S HE'S FINISHED.
HANE RAN OUT ON SAIDIN.
DUMPED BY HIS PERSONAL INSRUCTOR.
GATAN
YES, SIR.
PRACTICE YOUR OWN PASSAGE! YOU'VE GOT PLENTY TO DO!
YOU LOVE OTHER PEOPLE'S BAD LUCK THAT MUCH?
BESIDES, MAYBE THAT'S THE BEST WAY TO TAKE CARE OF THAT PROBLEM CHILD.
SHE'S THE BELOVED MAESTRO'S DISCIPLE. WE CAN'T COMPLAIN.
HANE SENSEI IS A LITTLE TOO CAPRICIOUS.

HANE
KREEEN
FEW

PLAY THE "THAIS" PIECE.
PLEASE, NACHI!
I CAN TRUST YOUR PERFORMANCE!
YOU'RE HEADED FOR THE BIG CONTEST IN BELGIUM.
YOU'VE WON SOME NATIONAL CONTESTS.
HANE LEFT BECAUSE I'M MISSING SOMETHING.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT.
BUT MAYBE I CAN GET SOMETHING FROM LISTENING TO YOU!
!
ALL RIGHT.
YOU'VE GOT MORE AWARDS THAN I HAVE!

EVEN NOW THAT SHE BECAME A WOMAN OF PEERLESS BEAUTY.
BUT SHE'S TOUGH, AND LIVES TO SUPPORT HER LARGE FAMILY.
THAT'S WHAT I THINK WHEN I PLAY.
..SHE STARTED DIRT POOR.
TO ME, A GIRL LIKE THAIS...
I CAN SEE THE IMAGE.
HOW CAN YOU PLAY THAT RUGGED SOUND?


IS "THAIS" THAT KIND OF STORY?
THE SONG IS SORT OF A MONOLOGUE OF HER THOUGHTS.
IN THIS SONG, THAIS WORRIES TO HER DEATH.

AS LONG AS I PLAYED WELL, IT DIDN'T MATTER.
CLAP
I WASN'T INTERESTED.
I ONLY HEARD A LITTLE ABOUT IT FROM HANE.
..YOU TRIED TO PLAY THE PIECE WITHOUT KNOWING ANYTHING ABOUT THE STORY?
WAIT... YOU MEAN YOU...

..IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM HOW I PLAYED IT THIS MORNING.
SHE PLAYS ACCORDING TO THE SCORE, AND YET...
THE MUSIC SHINED LIKE A CRYSTAL!
HANE WAS PAINFULLY TRANSPARENT AND SOLEMN.
AND DIFFERENT FROM HANE.
AS THOUGH THAIS HAD QUIT BEING A WHORE, AND WAS ALREADY A SAINT.
NACHI'S THAIS IS LIKE THE SOUND OF THE OCEAN
ALMOST LIKE A FISHER GIRL FLOATING ON THE WAVES.
LOW. HEAVY SOUNDS THAT ECHO IN THE BOTTOM OF MY CHEST, WITH SADNESS THAT MAKES MY LIMBS SHIVER.

IT REALLY SUCKED.
I NEVER WANT TO HEAR YOUR PLAYING AGAIN
THAT'S THE GREATEST PRAISE I COULD ASK FOR.
Story. Anatole France
Libretto Louis Gallet
Music Jules Massenet
Opera: "Thais"

NOW I'LL GO DO RESEARCH!
WHAT I WAS LACKING.
I WAS HOW TO FLESH OUT THE CHARACTER, RIGHT?
I'LL MAKE A THAIS SO BEAUTIFUL, HANE WILL BREAK DOWN CRYING!
HOLD ON, REIJI!
IS THAT THE ONLY REASON YOU DRAGGED ME OUT TO PLAY?!
TUDEW
WAH!

Firm in his intent, he calls upon the aristocrat Nicias at his elegant home.
"I must guide Thais to the road of virtue!"
"I must make this whore a nun!
"There is only one way to save both my soul and Alexandria itself.
He begs Nicias, Thais' lover, to give him a chance to convert Thais.
I DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD.
I BELIEVE ONLY IN LOVE.
As time passes, she is worn down like cobble-stones on the road
Her beauty fades day by day.
While absorbed in decadence, she is actually exhausted.
But that evening, Thais wept.

At the end of the fourth century, Alexandria is a tempest of decadence and pleasure.
From another land, on a mission-ary tour
...weary from his travels, the young monk Athanael tells his brothers a story.
"In the capital, all manner of corruption flourishes.
"And in the middle is the peerless beauty, the courtesan Thais."
But contrary to his words, he has harbored desire for the girl since he was a boy.
Athanael cannot escape his dreams of her enchanting beauty.

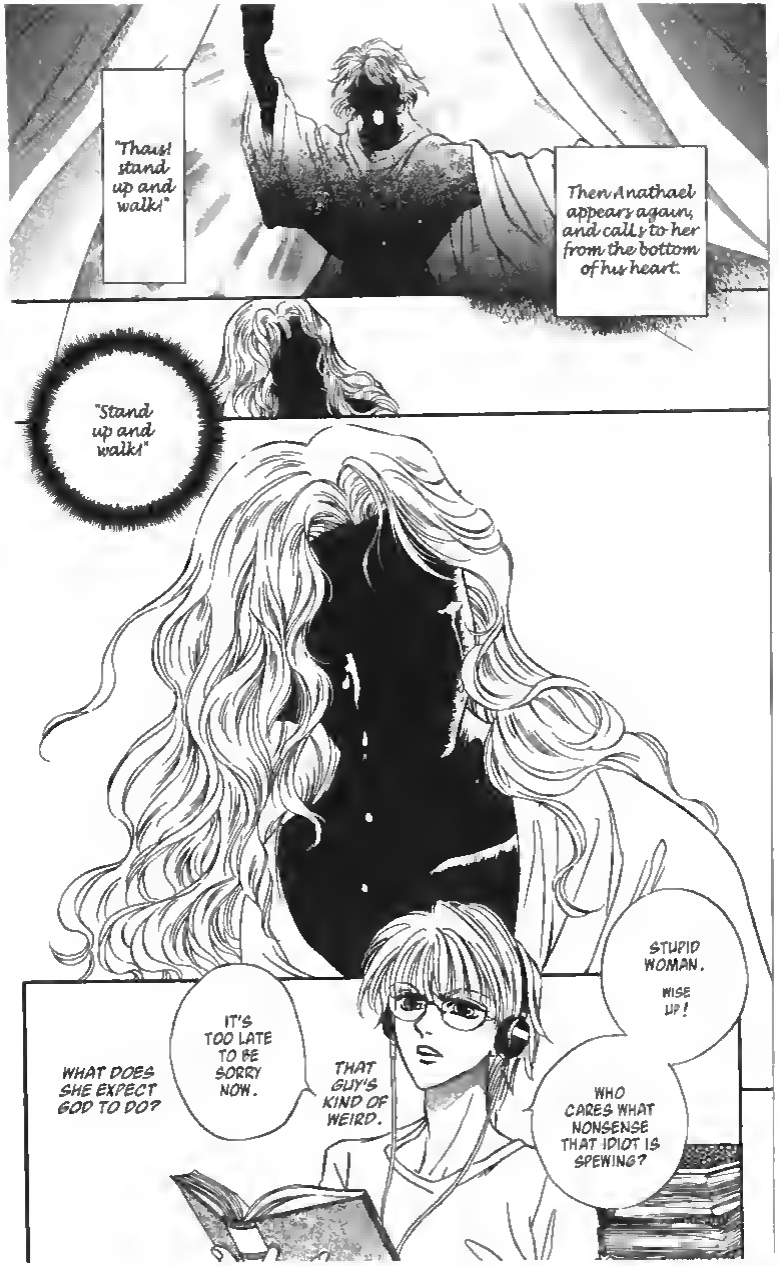
THE MUSIC I LOVE, PART 3

RECENTLY I REALLY LIKE MIDORI ITO'S FIGURE SKATING. IT'S REALLY COOL TO SEE HER DO THOSE TREMENDOUS LEAPS WITH THAT UNFAILING ENERGY. ONCE SHE USED "SCHEHERAZADE" AS THE MUSIC IN HER FULL ROUTINE. IT STARTS SO SOLEMN. SOON, A MELANCHOLY HEART-MELTING MELODY PLAYS, LIKE IT'S REPRESENTING A SINGLE GIRL. MIDORI ITO DANCES ON HER SKATES SO GRACEFULLY, EXTENDING HER HEART OUT THROUGH HER FINGERTIPS. I LOVE HER SKATING. BUT I ALSO LOVE THAT MUSIC.

I ONLY STARTED BUYING CD'S AFTER I STARTED *VERSUS*, BUT THAT'S THE ONLY SONG I CAN LISTEN TO ALL THE WAY THROUGH WITHOUT GETTING SLEEPY. THE PIECE HAS ITS OWN STORY. IT'S FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, IN THE TALE "A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS." I HOPE I CAN USE IT SOMETIME IN *VERSUS*. I ALSO LIKE "FINLANDIA" BY SIBELIUS. THANKS TO THE PERSON WHO SENT IT TO ME. IT WAS THE THEME TO A FAMOUS OLD ANIME, "KATRI, GIRL OF THE MEADOWS." I PREFER MUSIC THAT IS USED IN MOVIES, COMMERCIALS AND ANIME TO CREATE A MOOD.

CONTINUED IN PART 4

"SHE WAVERS BETWEEN THE WORLD OF PLEASURE AND THE WORLD OF VIRTUE.
"THE HEART OF THIS WOMAN.." HM?
FLIP
"THE NEXT PIECE IS 'THE MEDITATION OF THAIS.'
THAT'S SOMETHING YOU KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.
To express the heart of this woman is the ultimate goal.
Athanael's sufferings are secondary.
Man. Athanael's misery and ruin.
OH, SO WHAT I WAS PLAYING YESTERDAY..
THE HEART OF A WOMAN?
..HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MEN. BIG MISTAKE.
SNAP
SO THAT'S WHAT HANE WAS SO MAD ABOUT.


"Thaus! stand up and walk!"
Then Anathael appears again, and calls to her from the bottom of his heart.
"Stand up and walk!"
WHAT DOES SHE EXPECT GOD TO DO?
IT'S TOO LATE TO BE SORRY NOW.
THAT GUY'S KIND OF WEIRD.
STUPID WOMAN. WISE UP!
WHO CARES WHAT NONSENSE THAT IDIOT IS SPEWING?

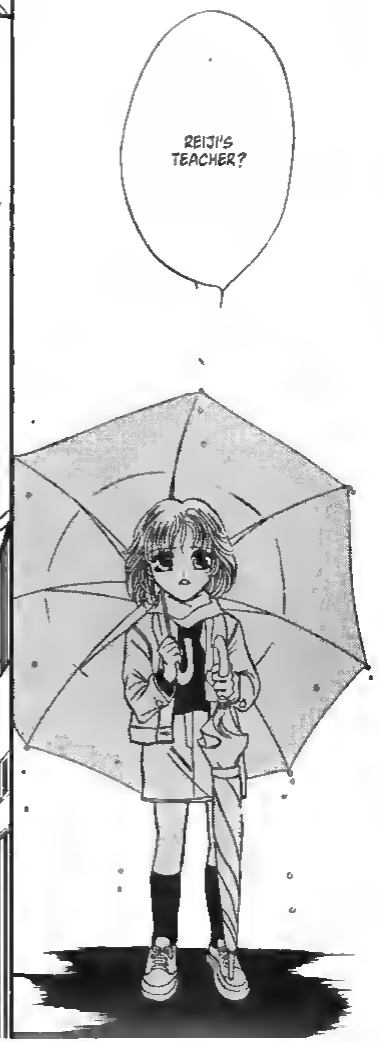
THE HEART OF THIS SONG IS SENTIMENTALITY.
SEE YOU TOMORROW!
IT NEEDS A WARMTH THAT PULLS TEARS FROM THE AUDIENCE!
ME CRY?! DON'T BE STUPID!
WHEN YOU PLAY THAT SONG, YOU NEED TO FEEL LIKE CRYING YOURSELF!
I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE WANDERING OFF TO.
BUT ALL YOU'RE DOING IS COMPLAINING ABOUT ME!
FLAP
Personal Record Saioin, Reiji
Winter Seminar, Day 4
MAKE THE DESIRE FOR HEAVEN STRONGER...
NO, MORE...
IT'S BECAUSE I'M THINKING SO MUCH WHILE I PLAY.
THE SUFFERING PART.. HMMM..
IT'S HARD TO PLAY.
MORE UNCERTAIN
THINNER

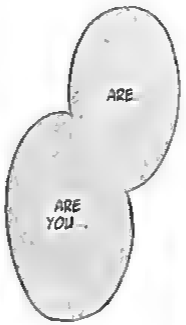
SWEETLY, SOFTLY.
LET'S TRY TO PLAY LIKE A GIRL.
TO EXPRESS A WOMAN'S HEART.
LIKE A WOMAN'S BODY.
Winter Seminar, Day 3
YOU'RE STILL WEAK ON THAIS' CHARACTER.
IT'S ONLY SUPERFICIALLY FEMININE.

PLEASE GO AWAY.
WE HAVE NOTHING TO DISCUSS.

Winter Seminar, Day 6
TOO STRONG, WITHOUT ANY CONTRAST. IT'S TOO FUSHY.
TOO MUCH FORCE.
Winter Seminar, Day 5
TOO FRACTURED. YOU'RE NOT A BEGINNER, YOU KNOW.
Winter Seminar, Day 7
I STILL DON'T GET IT.
A LITTLE.
EVEN JUST A LITTLE.
MAYBE I CAN GET A LITTLE GRIP ON IT IF I TRY SOME OTHER INSTRUMENT.
LET'S TRY IT ON PIANO

AAA!
WHAM!


REIJI'S TEACHER?


ARE
ARE YOU...

I'M ALL READY!
MITSUKO SENSEI!
AH...!

IN THE MORNING, A BEAUTIFUL THAIS. IN THE AFTER-NOON, A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN.
I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO PLAY THIS THING!
IT'S NO GOOD
THE MORE I DO IT, THE MORE THAIS SLIPS AWAY FROM ME.
IN THE EVENING A WITCH IT JUST KEEPS CHANGING!
IT JUST WON'T COME TOGETHER!
DAMN IT!
MIRUKA...
LIKE A LITTLE DOLL!
WOW! SHE'S SO CUTE!
I WANT A DRESS LIKE THAT, TOO!

THAT'S OKAY.
JUST DOING IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH.
YOU HOLD ONTO IT, MITSUKO SENSEI.
HERE'S THE PICTURE WE TOOK.
STUPID PAPA GOES OUT GAMBLING, AND DOESN'T COME BACK FOR DAYS.
AND NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT MAMA.
I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME.
NOBODY'S WORRIED ABOUT ME THERE, ANYWAYS.
THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS IN THIS HOME.
SQUEAK
I'VE LEFT HIM WITH THE SCHOOL.
PLEASE GO AWAY.
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU COME, I'VE NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT REIJI.

YEAH
I LOVE CUTE KIDS MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD!
WOW! I WUV YOU, WIDDLE MIRU!
CON-GRAT-ULATIONS!
SAIOIN MIRUKA!!
THE WINNERS OF THIS MONTH'S COS-PLAY CONTEST ARE HANE MITSUKO AND...
WE'LL DIVIDE ALL THIS STUFF BETWEEN US.
HUFF HUFF
THE POOR: WE EARN A LIVING WITH OUR BODIES!
YES! WE MADE OUT BIG TIME!
ZIRI ZIRI
Prizes

HE NEVER LETS ME SEE HIS WEAK SIDE.
REI IS MY PRINCE CHARMING.
HE'S SMART, AND COOL.
SO I ALWAYS HIDE BEHIND HIM.
..I SAW IT.
BUT WHEN REI WAS IN SIXTH GRADE...
I WOKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.
REI WAS STANDING BY DAD'S BED HOLDING A KNIFE.
I WAS TOO SCARED TO SPEAK.
HE DIDN'T MOVE TILL MORNING.
HE STAYED THERE.

SOME-THING'S MISSING IN REIJI'S HEART.
..AND YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT IS.
IT'S LIKE YOU SAID, MITSUKO.
I NEED IT TO MAKE HIM WIN THE JAPAN NATIONALS.
THAT'S RIGHT.
I TOLD YOU.
..HOW REIJI WAS RAISED GETTING BEAT BY PAPA.
NOD
REALLY, IT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN TO ME.
STUPID PAPA LIKES TO PICK ON SMALL AND WEAK THINGS.
REI GOT HIT WHEN HE WAS PROTECTING ME.

WHEN PAPA COMES HOME NEXT WEEK, I THINK HE'S GONNA KILL ME.
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?
YOU JUST LOST YOUR MONEY...
...AND YOUR BIG HOUSE, THAT'S ALL.
I KEEP WISHING ...
MITSUKO SENSEI... I'M GETTING CRAZY, TOO.
.. THAT REI HAD KILLED PAPA THEN.

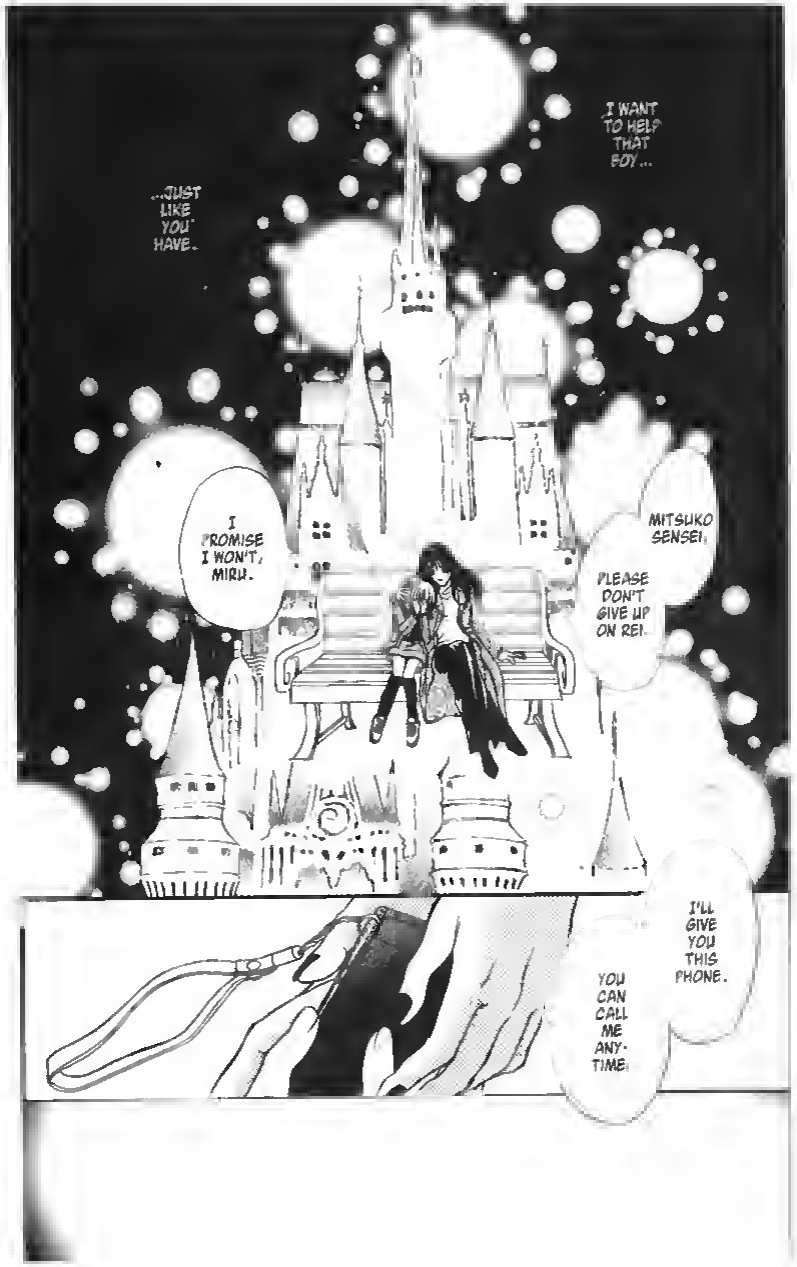
..FROM THEN ON..
.. I WAS GONNA PROTECT HIM.
THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED..
I NEVER WENT TO REI, NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT HURT.
I BECAME PAPA'S VICTIM.
IN REI'S PLACE.
.. IS GOING CRAZY.
PAPA ..
.. IT'S TOO LATE.
BUT...
REI'S GONNA BECOME A GREAT VIOLINIST.

AND NOW YOU'VE TOLD ME ABOUT HIM.
YOU'VE BEEN PROTECTING REIJI'S HEART.
MIRU..
I HEARD EVERYTHING YOU JUST SAID.
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND REIJI'S MUSIC BEFORE, BUT HE'S REALLY KIND.

THANK YOU, MIRU.

I KEEP HOPING ...
..THAT HOUSE WOULD JUST BURN TO THE GROUND.
I KEEP HOPING ....
..THAT MOM AND DAD WOULD JUST DIE.
I DON'T WANT REI TO KNOW ABOUT THIS!
BUT... NOW I'M THIS DIRTY PERSON!
I WANT TO GO BE WITH REI!
I WANT TO GO TO A MORE BEAUTIFUL PLACE!
I WANT TO PLAY THE VIOLIN, TOO!

"REI'S SO LONELY."
"I THINK HE CAN'T EVEN SEE OTHER PEOPLE."
"REI DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO THINK OF OTHERS."
CREAK
FLAP
WAKE YOUR-SELF UP.
AFTER I SHOWER, I WANT TO HEAR IT.
IS IT TIME?!
I DON'T THINK SO, MIRU.


...JUST LIKE YOU HAVE.
I WANT TO HELP THAT BOY...
I PROMISE I WON'T, MIRU.
MITSUKO SENSEI, PLEASE DON'T GIVE UP ON REI.
I'LL GIVE YOU THIS PHONE.
YOU CAN CALL ME ANY-TIME.

She even gave me this phone...
Mitsuko Sensei has come here every day to talk about you.
SHAM
WHAT DID YOU DO...TO MY SISTER?

YOU'RE MY SISTER, RIGHT? SO WORK WITH ME!
Huh?
LOOK, JUST SHUT UP AND LISTEN!
Uh... okay.
Wh-what? Miruka?
THIS PHONE...
YES.
RRR IRINGL
AAAGH!
How was that?
.....
Rei... you've gotten really bad.
BY THE WAY, MIRU... ABOUT THE LAST PHONE CALL
It's all thanks to Mitsuko Sensei
I really liked it.
BUT IT FEELS NOSTALGIC SOMEHOW.
LIKE YOU PLAYED WHEN WE WERE YOUNGER.

AAA
AAA
WELL, FORGET ABOUT IT!
TO UNDER-STAND ME?
YOU WANT TO HELP ME?
NOW YOU THINK YOU'RE MY MOTHER, HANE?!
DON'T BE SO CONCEITED!
YOU BRAT!

SMASH
YOU'RE BEING NICE TO HER BECAUSE YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HER.

CLOMP
CLOMP
CLOMP
CLOMP
MAYBE I PUSHED THE WRONG BUTTON..
DID WE GET CUT OFF?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
CLOMP
CLOMP
MIRUKA!
BIG BROTHER . REI..
A CHILD DOESN'T NEED A THING LIKE THAT.
WHERE DID YOU STEAL THAT?

UNDER-STANDING YOU IS MY JOB!!
YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO SUIT YOUR OWN SELFISH WHIMS!
YOU WANT MY SUPPORT BUT NOT MY UNDER-STANDING?
YOU DON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR-SELF, AND YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE!
YOU'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO TALK TO ME LIKE THAT!

Opus 3 Events of a Beautiful Night – End

Opus 4

Sacrifice

"YOU'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO TALK TO ME LIKE THAT!"
FLAP
"YOU DON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF...
"...AND YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE!
FLAP
WHY DIDN'T I SAY ANYTHING BACK?!

THE FURRY FRIENDS AROUND ME

LET'S KEEP TALKING ABOUT LOVELY PETS. IT REALLY WARMS MY HEART TO SEE AROUND ME ALL THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF PETS I'VE RECEIVED FROM MY FRIENDS, ASSISTANTS, RELATIVES, AND EVEN THE FANS.

THE ABSOLUTE BEST ONES WERE OF A HAMSTER NAMED "KOBAYASHIMARU." THE FIRST WAS AN ORDINARY SHOT, AND THE SECOND ONE HAS HIS OWNER SCRUNCHING UP KOBA'S FACE. IT MADE HIM LOOK SORT OF LIKE AN ALIEN.

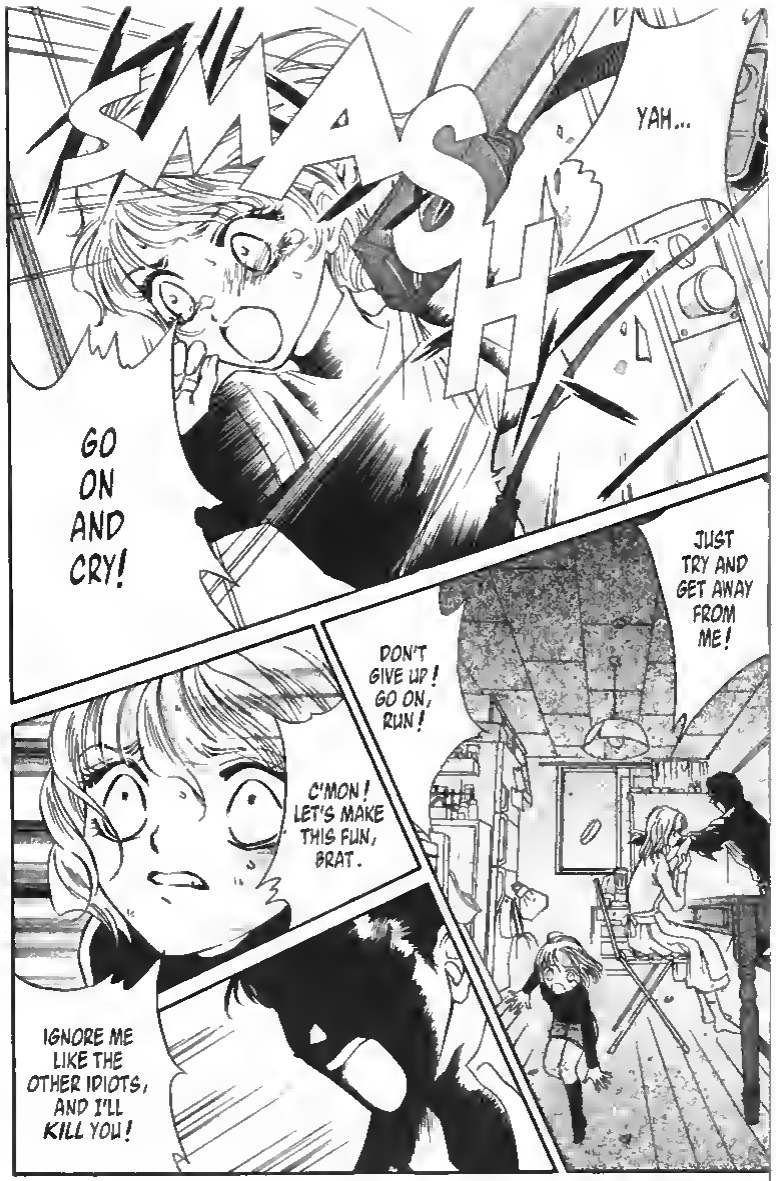
ANOTHER GOOD ONE IS OF A BLACK CAT NAMED "NANA," WHO WAS INSIDE A FISHNET BAG, HANGING IN MID-AIR. SHE HAD A REALLY SURPRISED LOOK ON HER FACE.

BY THE WAY, I DON'T CARE WHETHER THEY'RE PUREBRED OR MUTTS. BUT IF I HAD TO PICK A DOG, I'D PICK A PAPILLION OR A WHITE TERRIER, OR A BLACK-NOSED SHIBA DOG. FOR CATS, I'D PICK A NORWEGIAN FOREST CATS (THEY'RE HUGE!) I LOVE THEM! AFTER THAT, RABBIT. AND ANIMALS WITH DROOPY EARS. BUT I ESPECIALLY LOVE FURRY, CUDDLY ANIMALS. I LOVE THEM ALL!

REI!
CRY ALL YOU WANT. NO ONE'S COMING.
HEE
IDIOT!
REI!
HELP!

EVERYTHING SHE SAYS AND DOES TICKS ME OFF.
THIS IS DRIVING ME CRAZY!
BECAUSE WHAT SHE SAYS IS TRUE!
I CAN'T CALM DOWN WHEN HANE IS AROUND
SHE PULLS THEM ALL OUT INTO THE OPEN!
THE THINGS I AVOIDED THINKING ABOUT!!!
ALL THE THINGS I DIDN'T WANT TO LOOK AT..
MIRAKU'S CALL...
I FORGOT ABOUT THAT.
...THERE WAS NO ONE WHO DID THAT.
UNTIL NOW.

MAMA..
KA
BAM
KYAH!
MAMA!
WHY DON'T YOU HELP ME?
HELP ME!
WHY DO YOU JUST ALWAYS SIT THERE?
click
I'M SICK OF THIS.
SICK OF IT!
BE QUIET.
MAMA!


SMASH
YAH...
GO ON AND CRY!
JUST TRY AND GET AWAY FROM ME!
DON'T GIVE UP! GO ON, RUN!
C'MON! LET'S MAKE THIS FUN, BRAT.
IGNORE ME LIKE THE OTHER IDIOTS, AND I'LL KILL YOU!

KR
AK
WHAM

SHAN
KA

THE MUSIC I LOVE, PART 4

WHEN I SING KARAOKE, HALF THE SONGS I DO ARE DRAMA OR ANIME THEME SONGS.

IT'S EASY TO GET INTO IT WHEN THERE ARE VIDEOS TO GO ALONG WITH THE SONGS. SO EVEN IF I BUY THE GREATEST HITS OF A SINGER I LIKE, FIRST I LISTEN TO MY FAVORITE SONG ABOUT TEN TIMES, AND ONLY THEN DO I GET TO THE OTHER SONGS. IT TAKES ABOUT A MONTH FOR ALL THE SONGS TO REALLY SOAK IN WHERE I GET TO LIKE THEM.

ALL THE MUSIC TAPES THAT YOU FANS HAVE BEEN SENDING IN ARE PERFECT MATCHES FOR THE STUFF I LIKE. I'M REALLY HAPPY WHEN IT'S A TAPE OF ALL MY FAVORITES. SOMETIMES I EVEN START TO LIKE A SINGER I HATED BEFORE. THERE ARE A LOT OF SONGS I CAME TO LIKE BECAUSE OF THE PICTURES AND IMAGES THAT HELPED THEM OUT. *VS. VERSUS* IS A MANGA ABOUT STUFFY CLASSICAL MUSIC, BUT IT'S MOSTLY A STORY ABOUT CHARACTERS, SO THE IMAGES OF MUSIC ARE JUST FOR ADDED SPICE. I'M REALLY HAPPY WHEN I HEAR SOMEONE SAY, "AFTER READING *VERUS* I LISTENED TO THAT MUSIC, AND NOW I LIKE IT."

THE END

MOM!
WHERE'S MIRUKA? WHERE'S DAD?!
I SAW HIM HEADED TO THE BAR BY THE STATION.
WHY...
WHY DID THIS...
WHERE'S MIRUKA? WHAT DID YOU DO WITH HER?!
IT'S A CHILD'S JOB TO GET BEATEN...
NOTHING I COULD DO ABOUT IT...
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
MIRUKA HAD TO TAKE YOUR PLACE.
YOU LEFT HER ALONE.

REIJI!
YOU'RE HERE... I WAS TRYING TO CONTACT YOU!
THERE'S FIRE COMING OUT OF YOUR HOUSE!
FWOOM
THE FIRE TRUCK HASN'T COME YET!

IF IT MEANS SAVING MY SISTER, I DON'T CARE IF I NEVER PLAY THE VIOLIN AGAIN!
ROAR
GAAAA
SO HOT...
MIRUKA!
THE AIR IS BURNING.
WHERE ARE YOU?!
MIRUKA!
SWITCH

RAROAR
GYAAAH!
SHIVER
SHIVER

WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS IN THERE?!
THE FIREMEN WILL BE HERE SOON!
LEAVE IT TO THEM!
NO!
DON'T GO IN THERE!
!!

IT'S ALRIGHT NOW.
"MITSUKO SENSEI..
"I WANT TO GO BE WITH REI."

Rei!!
...

"SOMEDAY, I'LL GO TO SEE THEM."

"I WANT TO GO TO A MORE BEAUTIFUL PLACE."
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?!
THE FIRE TRUCK'S HERE!
"I WANT TO GO SOMEPLACE FAR AWAY."
LOOK! SOME KIDS ARE COMING OUT!
GET THE HOSE!
"MITSUKO SENSEI."
"THERE ARE LOTS OF THEM, RIGHT?"
"SOME PLACE I'VE NEVER SEEN.
"THERE ARE LOTS OF MARVELOUS WORLDS I'VE NEVER IMAGINED.

THEY SAY HER FATHER DID IT.
AFTER TWO WEEKS, SHE CAN FINALLY WALK WITH A CRUTCH.
HIS LITTLE SISTER WAS IN BAD SHAPE WHEN SHE GOT HERE
HER MOTHER WON'T TALK TO ANYBODY.
CHARGED WITH CHILD ABUSE AND ARSON.
YES, I HEAR HE GOT ARRESTED.
SO WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE KIDS NOW?
THERE'S SOMEONE I WANT YOU TO MEET.
IT'S ABOUT YOUR SISTER.
HANE..
SAIOIN!

FLIP
DING DONG
GARA GARA
REI ..
YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME EVERY-DAY.
DUMMY!
DID HER BROTHER COME AGAIN TODAY?
HE'S REALLY DEVOTED TO HER.

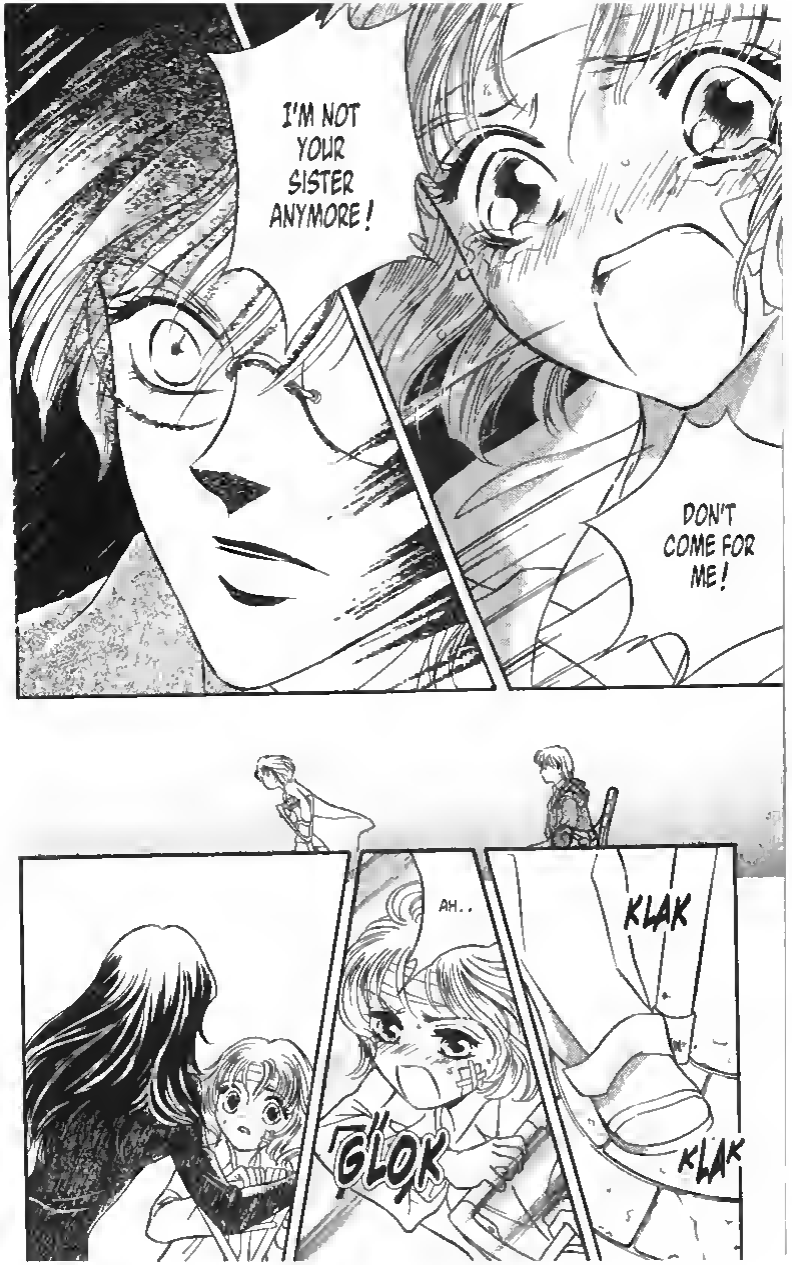
I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO HAVE TO PUT HER IN AN INSTITUTION.
SO THE WAY THINGS STAND..
SHE'S ALONE.
. .I KNEW YOU WERE RUNNING AROUND ALL NIGHT WITHOUT SLEEP, LOOKING FOR A FOSTER HOME.
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE JUST MY TUTOR...
BUT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO HELPED.
IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S ALMOST CRYING.
SOME-PLACE YOU COULD GO VISIT EVERY-DAY.
I WANTED SOME-PLACE CLOSE.
I'M GRATE-FUL.
THERE IS A BUSINESS-MAN LIVING IN NEW YORK.
MISTER YUKI AND HIS WIFE.
I COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING IN JAPAN.
HANE'S FACE..

A FOSTER HOME FOR MIRUKA?
DID YOU FIND ONE?
MY PARENTS CAN'T RAISE KIDS.
AND WE'VE GOT NO RELATIVES.
HOW. DID YOU KNOW?
HAKUTO IS TAKING CARE OF ME.
AND ME—
I FIGURED IT OUT.

GO TO NEW YORK, MIRUKA.
I THINK YOU SHOULD.
THE YUKIS...
TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM OUR PARENTS.
..THEY SEEM LIKE NICE PEOPLE.
LET THEM HELP YOU.
BECAUSE YOU'RE MY SISTER.
YOU WANTED TO STUDY THE VIOLIN, RIGHT?
I HEARD FROM HANE.
I'LL COME GET YOU.
..AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
I'LL ASK THEM FOR YOU.
I'M SURE YOU'LL DO WELL.

THEIR DAUGHTER DIED OF AN ILLNESS.
SHE WAS ONE OF MY STUDENTS.
SHE WAS ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS MIRUKA.
WHEN THEY SAW MIRU'S PHOTO AND HEARD ABOUT HER .
. THEY REALLY WANTED TO MEET HER.
THEY'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR A CHILD TO ADOPT..
..WITH-OUT LUCK.
THEY CAME ALL THE WAY FROM NEW YORK TO MEET YOU BOTH.

I'M SORRY, MIRU.
I'M SORRY I ARRANGED ALL THIS WITHOUT TELLING YOU.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I'LL GO TO AMERICA.
I'LL BE THE CHILD FOR THOSE PEOPLE.
I'M...
I'M SICK OF BEING A BURDEN TO REI.
ALL BECAUSE OF MY ACCIDENT..
..REI'S WINTER SEMINAR GOT RUINED.
THE CONTEST IS GETTING CLOSER AND CLOSER.
BUT HE GOES FROM SCHOOL TO THE HOSPITAL EVERY DAY.
I KNOW HE HASN'T BEEN SLEEPING AT ALL.
HE'S ALWAYS SO TIRED.
HE PRACTICES OUT IN THE HALLS.
THE NURSES MADE HIM STOP.


I'M NOT YOUR SISTER ANYMORE!
DON'T COME FOR ME!
AH..
GLOK
KLAK
KLAK

MITSUKO SENSEI!
IS AMERICA A GOOD PLACE?
IT'S A BIG, WIDE COUNTRY.

IT'S MESSING HIM UP.
YOU...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO FORCE YOURSELF.
IT'S HURTING REI.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME SEE ME.

...TO CAUSE HIM ANY MORE TROUBLE.
I DON'T WANT...

REIJI..
THANK YOU, SIR.
HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT?
ABOUT LETTING US ADOPT YOU, TOO..
BUT I CAN'T ASK YOU TO DO ANY MORE FOR US.
DO YOUR BEST WITH YOUR VIOLIN LESSONS.
WE PROMISE WE'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF MIRUKA.
YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ANYMORE.
IT'S TIME TO DEPART.
WE'LL GET ON BOARD AND WAIT FOR YOU.
BOOOWHA

THE ADOPTION PROCESS WAS COMPLETED.
MIRUKA'S INJURIES WERE HEALING UP WELL.
SHE COULD HOBBLE AROUND WITHOUT THE CRUTCH.
FEBRUARY WAS ALMOST HALF OVER.
AND "THAT DAY" FINALLY CAME.
IT'S SO BIG!
WE'RE GOING TO AMERICA ON THIS?!
I ALWAYS WANTED TO RIDE ONE.
SO WE'RE TAKING A VACATION.
DO YOU GET SEA-SICK, MIRUKA?
I DON'T KNOW.
SHE'S GETTING ON WELL WITH MY WIFE.
IT'S LIKE OUR DAUGHTER HAS COME BACK.
WOW! IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL!
OKAY!
WELL, LET'S TRY TO ENJOY IT.

I'LL SOON FORGET ABOUT YOU, REI.

I KNOW YOU'LL BE OKAY.

EVEN IF I'M NOT AROUND

SO I WON'T CRY OR ANYTHING.

BECAUSE YOU HAVE A DREAM

YOUR DREAM.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

YOU LOOK SO SAD.

GEE, REI...

I'LL BE FINE.

AND I'LL MAKE LOTS OF FRIENDS.

I'M ALWAYS OKAY.

I'LL STUDY AND LEARN LOTS OF ENGLISH.

WITH AN ATTITUDE LIKE THAT, YOU'LL NEVER BECOME A REAL MAN.

THE DREAM IS SOME-THING
...I DON'T HAVE.
...I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER HAVING.
SOMETHING THAT GRAND.
SOMETHING THAT PRETTY...
THE ONLY HOPE I HAVE IS TO SEE YOUR SMILING FACE.

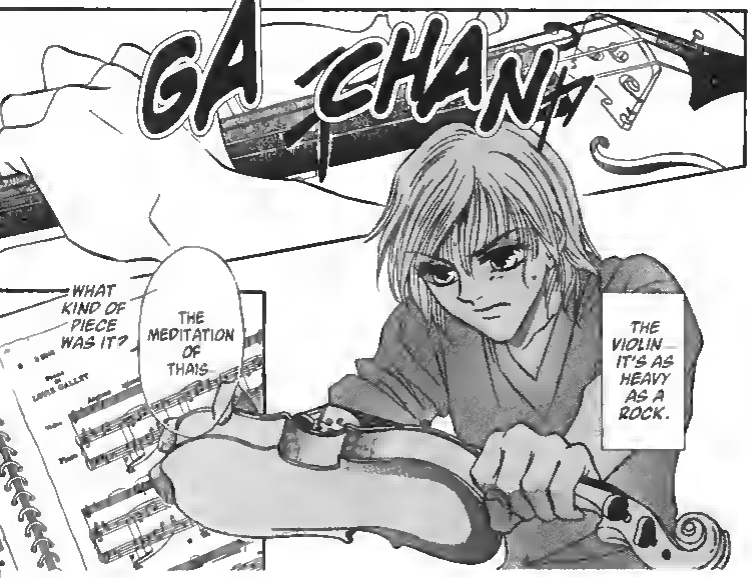
BECOME THE WORLD'S BEST VIOLINIST.
...COME TRUE.
MAKE YOUR DREAM

NOW I'M ALL ALONE.
WHAT DO I DO?
WHO WILL I PLAY THE VIOLIN FOR?
HOW DO I GO ON?
LET'S GO BACK TO THE DORM.

IT'S THE ONLY REASON I PLAY.
AND YOU SMILE.
I PLAY THE VIOLIN.
BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH I SUFFER..
I KNOW YOU'RE GOING AWAY FOR MY SAKE.
EVEN IF MY ARM FEELS LIKE IT'S BEING SNAPPED OFF...
I WANTED YOU TO BE SWINGING FROM IT.
REI...
REI
REI...

SAIOIN!
SOMEBODY TELL ME!

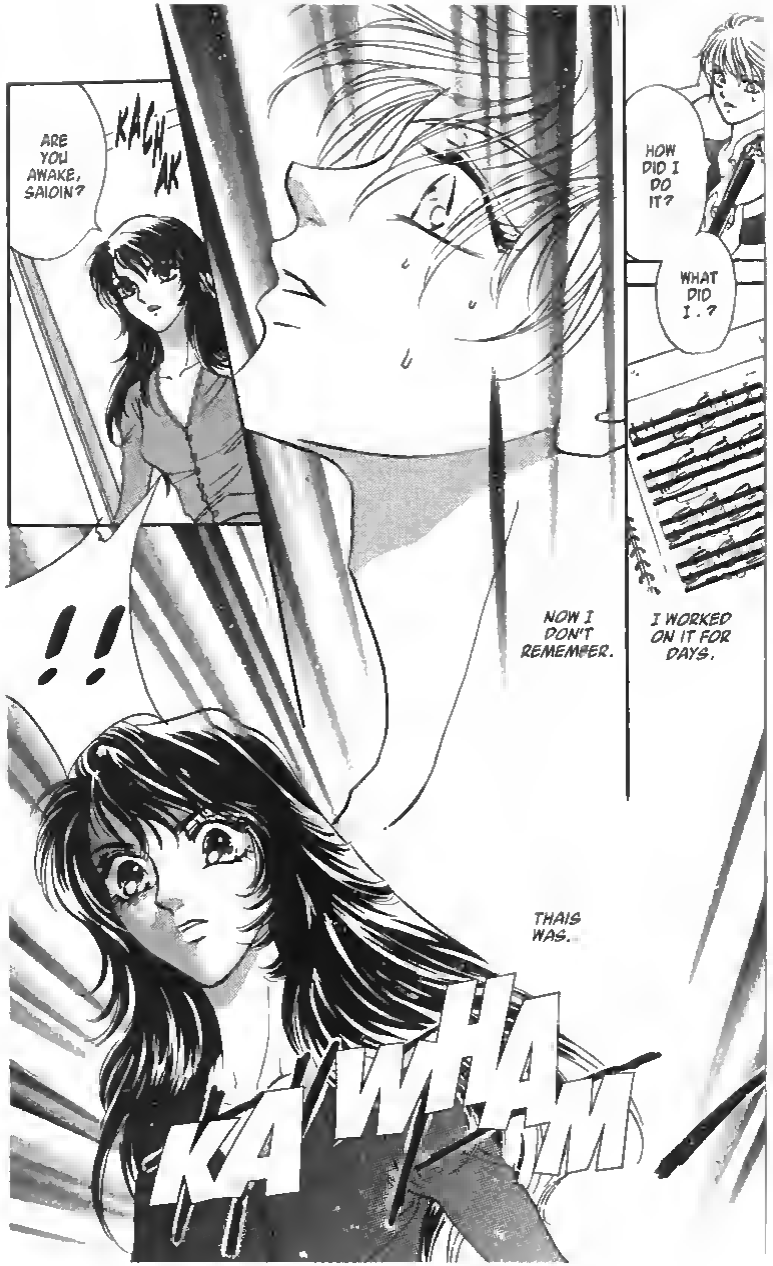
HAVE I BEEN ASLEEP THE WHOLE TIME?
SINCE THAT EVENING WHEN I COLLAPSED?
HOW MANY DAYS HAS IT BEEN?
TICK
TOCK
MY RED-ROOM IN THE DORM?
ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT.
I'VE GOTTA PRACTICE.
PRACTICE...


GA-CHAN!!
WHAT KIND OF PIECE WAS IT?
THE MEDITATION OF THAIS.
THE VIOLIN... IT'S AS HEAVY AS A ROCK.

WILL THERE EVER BE ANYONE ELSE? CAN ANYONE OTHER THAN YOU EVER LOVE ME?
LET'S GO PICK OUT DRESSES FOR THE CONTEST.
NACHI!
I'LL LOOK AT THEM FOR YOU!
NO, THERE WILL NEVER BE ANYONE ELSE.
I HAVE NO DREAMS, NO FAMILY, NO FRIENDS...I HAVE NOTHING IN THIS WORLD.
I'M A PATHETIC EXCUSE FOR A PERSON.

There are only ten days left to the Japan National Contest.

Opus 4 Sacrifice -- End



DON'T MISS THE NEXT CHAPTER ON SALE IN JULY!

VS.

VERSUS

Volume 2

Following Michiru's move to America, Reiji finds himself in a terrible slump, unable to play the violin. Mitsuko takes him to the country for some much needed rest and relaxation. With a major national contest looming, Reiji can't stay on the sidelines too long. But a rival has some dangerous plans in the works for Reiji's return. The competition is about to turn deadly.

VERSUS (VS!) Vol. 2 © 1999 Keiko Yamada/Akitashoten.

A musical **prodigy**, his **teacher** and the **dark secrets** that bind them.

For Reiji, a gifted young violinist, success may be the key to escaping from his miserable home life–and rescuing his sister from that environment. But talent can only take him so far; special training will also be needed. Enter Mitsuko, a prodigy until an accident left her unable to play. Now she is going to help Reiji achieve the success she could never attain.

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